Excavations of Archaeological sites in Tamilnadu

[1969-1995]

Editor

T.S. SRIDHAR, IAS,

Special Commissioner of Archaeology

Department of Archaeology
Government of Tamilnadu, Chennai
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Front Cover : 1. A terracotta seal - Boluvampatti
2. Brick structure - the soakage rings - Korkai

Back Cover : 1. Terracotta figure - Boluvampatti
2. Inscribed potsherd - Korkai
3. Urn - Kovalanpottal
4. Trench - Palayarai

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	Page No.
Preface	v
Map of Tamilnadu showing excavated sites	1
1. TIRUTTANGAL	3
2. KOVALANPOTTAL	29
3. ANAMALAI	34
4. THONDI	38
5. KORKAI	46
6. PALLAVAMEDU	57
7. BOLUVAMPATTI	60
8. PANAYAKULAM	63
9. KURUMBANMEDU	66
10. PALAYARAI	68
11. KANNANUR	79
List of Archaeological Excavations	85
Plates	1-14

1. Excavated Trench - Tiruttangal
2. Microlithic Tools - Tiruttangal
3. Grooved Tiles - Tiruttangal
4. Dupakalasam - Incense Burner - Tiruttangal
5. Urn - Kovalanpottal
6-7. Inscribed Potsherds - Kovalanpottal
8. Dolmen - Anamalai
9. Exposed view of Dolmen - Anamalai
10-11. Korkai Potteries - surface find
12-13. Graffiti Potsherds - Korkai
14. Excavated Trench - Pallavamedu
15. Jar -Closer view - Pallavamedu
16. Sandal Paste Grinding Stone - Pallavamedu
17. Excavated Antiquity - Pallavamedu
18. Inscribed Potsherds - Boluvampatti
19. Terracotta earlobes - Boluvampatti
20-21. Yaksha - Front & Back view - Boluvampatti
22. Terracotta figurines - Panayakulam
23. Terracotta Spouts - Kurumbanmedu
24. Potsherds - Palayarai
25. Heap of Terracotta Lamps - Palayarai
26. Exposed view of Sump Well - Kannanur

PREFACE

The State Department of Archaeology was started in the year 1961 with the objectives of (a) conservation and preservation of ancient monuments in Tamil Nadu, and (b) to conduct excavations at historical sites. Subsequently, its activities were expanded to include Epigraphy, setting up of site museums, chemical preservation of art objects, registration of antiquities etc.

The Department has identified and carried out excavations at historically important sites. It has so far excavated 25 sites and unearthed various artefacts. Geological survey of the area to be excavated is also carried out. Some of the excavated sites such as Karur, Pumpuhar, Gangaikondacholapuram and Thirukoilur have also been converted into site museums.

Selection of the site for excavation is made on the basis of the study of literature, history and inscriptions to find out the existence of important places such as capitals, ports and cities of ancient ruling monarchs and chieftains. This is done by field exploration at the site; also the accidental finds that occur in some places lead the archaeologists to locate the sites of ancient period. So far

reports have been published in respect of seven excavations, namely, Vasavasamudram (1974), Alagankulam-a Preliminary report (1992), Padavedu (1993), Thirukoilur (1996),The Metropolis of Medieval Cholas - Gangaikondacholapuram (1998), Mangudi (2003), and Perur (2003).

The reports of the sites excavated from 1969 to 1995 are compiled and published now as a single book. Most of the excavations done at these sites were only minor and trial trenches. They were laid to expose the antiquity of the sites, and the archaeological importance of that place.

All the excavated sites namely, TIRUTTANGAL, KOVALANPOTTAL, ANAMALAI, THONDI, KORKAI, PALLAVAMEDU, BOLUVAMPATTI, PANAYAKULAM, KURUMBANMEDU, PALAYARAI, and KANNANUR have yielded potsherds, terracotta figurines and bangle pieces. Thondi and Korkai are the two seaports excavated; the latter is the more important site where excellent artefacts confirming the location of the ancient capitals, and their trade relationship between North India and Tamilnadu have been established.

The excavation at **Korkai** assumed great importance because the charcoal (C14 DATING METHOD) found in a

trench during the excavation have been dated by the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research to a date of 785 BCE, thereby suggesting that the habitation at Korkai was in existence even 2800 years ago. The inscribed potsherds found at Korkai confirm that the Tamil Brahmi inscription was prevalent in Tamilnadu for writing Tamil language from 3rd century BCE.

The excavation at **Anamalai** has thrown light on burial type and the burial antiquities. These objects are dated to the megalithic period i.e. 300 BCE to 300 CE. **Tiruttangal** excavation has yielded a good number of antiquities pertaining to Megalithic and Microlithic periods; on the basis of archaeological finds, the human occupation might have existed here since 8000 BCE. **Boluvampatti,** once a flourishing trade centre, had a significant find of a terracotta seal with the royal emblem of a bow, a seated tiger and a fish along with an inscription, which reads as the word "*Varman*" of 7th century CE. **Kurumbanmedu,** situated 3 kms on the western side of the Brahadeswara temple at Thanjavur, was the capital of the imperial Cholas. As it was assumed that the palace site of the Cholas might be situated in this area, the excavation was carried out. The findings from the trench include medieval period

antiquities like tiles, big bricks and terracotta lamps. **Palayarai** was the capital of the later Chola kings. But the history of Palayarai, which started with that of Megalithic period continued up to later medieval period.

Kannanur, near Trichirappalli was the Hoysala capital in the period 13th century CE. Water supply for the palace was obtained from the Coleroon River through a sump-well. The excavation has revealed the mode of construction of the irrigation system. **Panayakulam** excavation has revealed archaeologically important antiquities like potsherds, terracotta figurines, bones, and bricks. Terracotta figurines are assignable to 8th century CE, and the excavation proves the continuous occupation of the site from 6rd century CE to 12th century CE. **Pallavamedu** is a mound situated at the outskirts of Kanchipuram; it is traditionally believed to contain relics of the Pallavas. The present excavation revealed three periods of occupation. The findings are related to the Pallava rule of this region from 6th to 9th century CE. **Thondi** was a port town during the Sangam period; but in the trial excavation potteries like coarse red ware, belonging to later period were collected. **Kovalanpottal** trench has revealed the existence of megalithic culture at Madurai and the mode of burial

that existed in those times.

It is with a deep sense of gratification and fulfillment that I present this collection of excavation reports to the attention of the discerning body of archaeologists in South India. As can be seen from the index, the archaeological excavations covering eleven sites have an almost equal spread throughout the state of Tamil Nadu. It stretches from the northern most point of Pallavamedu, in Kanchipuram to Korkai in the deep south, and from Palayarai near Kumbakonam in the east to Boluvampatti in Kongunadu in the west. Chronologically, the sites have been arranged in a descending order beginning from the microlithic period through Sangam age down to megalithic and medieval times. It covers the reign of the Pallavas, the Cheras and the Cholas as well as the Hoysalas over a period of 17 centuries i.e. from 300 BCE to 14th century CE. These excavations were carried out over an extended period of nearly 25 years, the earliest being Anamalai in the year 1969-70, and the latest being Thiruttangal in the year 1995. However, due to administrative reasons, the reports on the finds were not published, except the seven reports indicated above. Further reports relating to past excavations are under preparation and shall be published

in due course. It is now considered appropriate that the painstaking and dedicated efforts of a generation of archaeologists, led by the Venerable Dr. R.Nagasamy, Thiru Natana Kasinathan and Thiru A.Abdul Majeed - all erstwhile Directors of the State Department of Archaeology in Tamil Nadu - are duly rewarded through this publication. I thank the Government of Tamil Nadu for sanctioning adequate funds for publication of this document. I wish to place on record the support extended by several officers, especially, Thiru. K.Sridaran, Registering Officer, Tmt.S.Vasanthi, Archaeologist, Tmt.B.Valarmathi, Steno-Typist, and the photographer Thiru. M.T.Sridharan in the preparation of this report.

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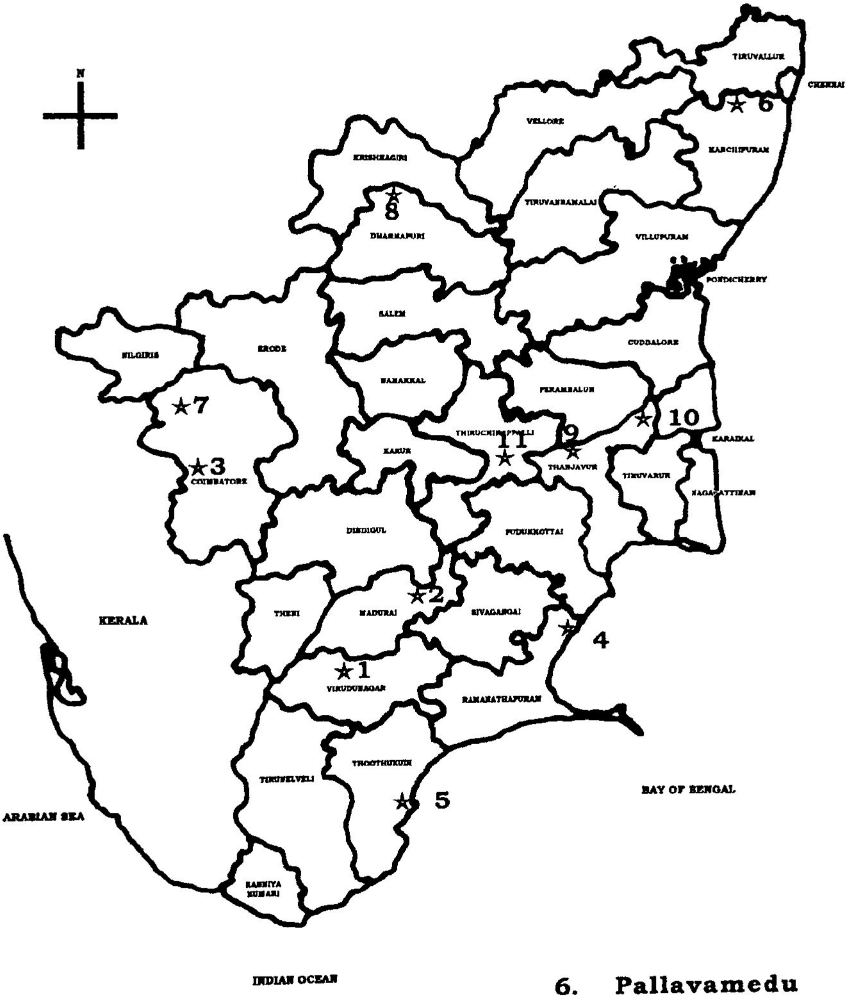
07.09.2004

MAP OF TAMILNADU

SHOWING EXCAVATED SITES



1. Tiruttangal
2. Kovalanpottal
3. Anamalai
4. Thondi
5. Korkai
6. Pallavamedu
7. Boluvampatti
8. Panayakulam
9. Kurumbanmedu
10. Palayarai
11. Kannanur

TIRUTTANGAL

INTRODUCTION:

Tiruttangal, situated about 4 km. north of Sivakasi town, which is known for matches, crackers and cottage industries, is on the road from Virudhunagar to Sivakasi, in Virudhunagar District. (Latitude of 9^0 28' 54' and Longitude of 77^0 48' 16' E). It is well connected by road and rail with the neighbouring towns. Frequent bus services from important towns like Madurai, Srivilliputhur, Sankarankoil, Virudhunagar and Sivakasi help us reach this village with ease.

Physiographically, Tiruttangal looks like a plain terrain. It is mainly drained by the river 'Arjuna" which falls into the tributary of Vaippar. The occurrences of black and red surface soil in the entire area are a colourful and attractive sight to anyone who passes this village. Owing to the presence of black and red soil, the major crops namely cotton and chilly are extensively cultivated here.

It is believed that Tiruttangal had flourished as an important town during 2nd century CE, as references are found in the epic *Silapathikaram*. *Katturaikathai* of the epics refer this village Tiruttangal as a Brahmin settlement.

Besides this, there are also references about this village in the inscription found at Sri Nindra Narayana Perumal temple of Tiruttangal. References about poets who hailed from this village are also traced out in the Sangam literature namely *Natrinai* and *Kurunthogai*.

The poets are:

1. Mudakallanar, the author of the poem 217 in *Kurunthogai*

2. Porkilian Vennahanar, the author of the poem 313 of *Natrinai*

3. Athirayan Chengannanar, the author of the poem 386 of *Natrinai*

The important temples located in this village are Sri Nindra Narayana Perumal temple, Sri Irunellinathaswami temple and Sri Subramanyaswamy temple.

INSCRIPTIONAL REFERENCES:

Like Sangam literature, inscriptions found in Sri Nindra Narayana Perumal Temple of Tiruttangal also give references about this village. These inscriptions are both in Vattezhuthu and Tamil character which are datable to Pandya period. It is deciphered from the inscriptions that

this village was called as *Tiruttangaal*, which is now corrupted as Tiruttangal. Some of the versions of inscriptions referring to Tiruttangal are mentioned below:

1. King : Srivallabha Pandya

   Script : Tamil

   Date : 12th Century CE

   Context : கருநிலக்குடி நாட்டுத் தேவதான
   பிரம்மதேயம் திருத்தங்கால்

   "Karunilakkudi Nattu Devatana
   Brammadeyam Tiruttangaal"

2. King : Srivallabha Pandya

   Script : Tamil

   Date : 12th Century CE

   Context : ஸ்ரீபாண்டி நாட்டு மதுரோதய
   வளநாட்டு கருநிலக்குடி நாட்டுத்
   தேவதான பிரம்மதேயம் திருத்தங்கால்

   "Sri Pandi Nattu Madurothaya
   Valanattu Karunilakkudi Nattu
   Devadhana Brammadeyam Tiruttangaal"

3. The other two inscriptions mentioning this village are found in Vattezhuthu character. One of these inscriptions is assignable to Parantaka I (CE 933) while the other inscription dated to 8th Century CE belongs to the Pandya king Maranchadayan. From these inscriptional evidences it is ascertained that Tiruttangal had flourished as Devadana Tiruttangaal (தேவதான திருத்தங்கால்).

TEMPLES OF TIRUTTANGAL

Sri Nindra Narayana Perumal Temple

In the northern portion of this village a hillock known as Tangalgiri, 100 ft. tall accommodates the Sri Nindra Narayana Perumal Temple, which faces south; climbing a flight of steps, one may reach the spacious Kalyana Mantapam. To the west of this Mantapam, a cave temple-having traces of the pandyas art is noticed. Here, the stupendous image of Pallikonda Perumal is housed. Sridevi and Bhudevi serve at his feet while sages Markandaya and Bhrigu occupy a prominent place on either side. In this sanctum sanctorum the presiding deity sri Nindra Narayana Perumal, as the name implies, presents himself in a standing posture and faces east.

Inscriptional remains in the temple dated 1032 CE

refer to the presiding deity as Ramaswamy. A lake referred to as a Devendhra Vallaba Per-eri existed by the side of the temple. A shrine was erected for installing the image of the Singha Perumal (Narasimha) in the reign of Maravarman Kulasekhara Pandya (13th Century CE).

Sri Karunellinathar temple

On the outer side of this hillock another rock-cut temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. The presiding deity in the form of a Linga referred to as Karunellinathar. In a separate sanctum his consort Meenakshi is housed. Subsidiary deities like Vinayaka, Dakshinamoorthy, Chandra and Surya are accommodated inside the temple. A single wall separates the Shiva and Vishnu temple. Here, Shiva is known as Irunellinathaswami as two nelli (Gooseberry) trees are located within the temple premises. This temple was constructed in 1233 CE in the reign of Sundara Pandya.

EXPLORATION AND EXCAVATION (Plate - 1)

During exploration conducted by the state department of archaeology, archaeological antiquities namely microlithic flakes, cores, ornamented shell bangle pieces; black and red potsherds, black polished potsherds and russet-coated potsherds were collected in and around this

village. These archaeological antiquities had paved the way to carryout the excavation. The occurrences of microlithic and Sangam period potteries revealed that the human settlement might have been commenced since 8000 BCE. The excavation was conducted in the year 1994-95. Four trenches were laid at the western side of this village.

Trench 1 (TRT-1)

Trench No.1 was laid to an extent of 4x4 metres. The colour of the soil was brownish in the upper level and reddish at lower level. This trench yielded black and red potsherds, black potsherds coarse and red potsherds and a terracotta earlobe. It was dug up to a depth of 43 cm where country rock found.

Trench-2 (TRT-2)

Since rock formation was noticed at lower depth level of TRT-1, Trench 2 was laid at a little distance away from the trench-1. The area of excavation was measured to be 3x4 metres. In this trench, black and red potsherds, black potsherds and glass & shell bangle pieces were collected. The findings from this trench are microlithic core (jasper) at 56 cm and a terracotta object looks like srivatsam at 34 cms. The virgin soil was noticed at a depth of 93 cms.

Trench - 3 (TRT - 3)

TRT - 3 (5x4mts) was laid south of TRT - 1, at quite a little distance. Soil was brownish clay in upper level and red soil with gravel at depths. It was dug up to a depth of 73 cm where virgin soil was encountered. It has revealed two stratigraphical layers. Unlike earlier trenches, this had not yielded valuable archaeological antiquities. Only hip-hops were collected in large quantity.

Trench - 4 (TRT - 4)

Trench 4 was laid between TRT - 1 & 2 with an extent of 4x4 mtrs. Interestingly, it had yielded microlithic flakes at 65 cm and 68 cm depth. Besides this, a microlithic core was also collected at 71 cm depth. Above 65 cm depth, antiquities related to megalithic period namely black and red ware potsherds were collected. The other antiquities unearthed in this trench are grooved tiles at 21cms. It has revealed two cultural layers. The natural soil was noticed at 85 cm depth.

The upper stratigraphic layer – (1) was found yielding megalithic potteries while the second layer yielded microlithic tools, flakes and cores. Hence, the trench TRT - 4 is considered to be important as it has revealed cultural variations very clearly. The succession of

megalithic culture and microlithic culture is descending orders as revealed by TRT - 4 strongly confirm that microlithic culture was succeeded by megalithic in this region.

POTTERY (Pottery Drawings pages 19-28)

This excavation had yielded varied type of potteries namely black and red ware, black ware, red slipped ware and coarse red ware.

Black and Red ware

The excavation conducted at Tiruttangal has only yielded fragments of black & red ware potteries; mostly the shapes are bowls and dishes; a full shaped black and red pot was found.

Types

1. Bowl, fragmentary, moderately thick rim.
2. Lid, fragmentary
3. Lid, fragmentary
4. Lid, fragmentary
5. Lid, fragmentary
6. Dish, fragmentary, thin rim.
7. Lid, fragmentary

8. Bowl, fragmentary, moderately thick rim

9. Bowl, fragmentary, thin rim.

10. Dish, fragmentary, moderately thick rim.

Black ware

Both interior and exterior of this ware are black in colour, which was found associated with Black and Red ware. These sherds were collected in considerable quantity. Distinctive shapes observed among this ware are dish, bowl, jar and small-mouthed pot.

Types

11. Carinated pot, thick fragmentary, thick grooved rim.

12. Vessel, fragmentary thick grooved rim.

13. Vessel, fragmentary, rim is moderately thick and grooved.

14. Jar, fragmentary thick rim, grooves seen

15. Jar, fragmentary thin rim, everted, ribs are noticed.

16. Jar, fragmentary thin rim, flanged.

Coarse Red Ware

It is entirely different from the Black and Red ware and red-slipped ware. It is a dull Red ware made of impure clay mixed with sand. The surface is rough and uniformly fired. Dish, small-mouthed pot and storage jar are the common shapes noticed among the collections.

Types

17. Storage pot, fragmentary thick rim, slightly inverted bend.
18. Storage jar, fragmentary, rim is broad and thick.
19. Storage jar, fragmentary thick rim inverted bend.
20. Small globular pot, fragmentary, moderately thick rim.
21. Carinated pot, fragmentary, grooved thick rim.
22. Lid, fragmentary.
23. Globular pot, fragmentary, small mouth, thin rim.
24. Jar, fragmentary, grooved thick rim.
25. Small pot, fragmentary, thick rim.
26. Bowl, fragmentary, thin rim.
27. Pot, fragmentary, thick rim.

Red-slipped ware

In this excavation few red-slipped ware sherds of dishes small and large mouthed pots were recovered. The common shapes encountered among these potteries collected in this excavation were dish, and small and large mouthed pot.

Types

28. Pot, fragmentary, thin rim.
29. Pot, fragmentary, thick grooved rim.
30. Pot, fragmentary, thin rim.
31. Fragment, shoulder portion, with nail impressions.

Microliths

As we all know microlithic period was characterized by the usage of rocks in micro size for domestic purpose. During this period man preferred to live on the riverbanks and eke out his livelihood by taking fishing as the major occupation. Besides this, hunting was also a part of their life. It is understood from the collection of antiquities at microlithic sites that minerals like CHERT, FLINT, and JASPER were the source rocks used for making tools. In Tamilnadu microlithic sites are well distributed in and around Sawyerpuram area - known as Teri sites in Tuticorin

district. The known sites are Kattalankulam, Meiganapuram, Kuttampuli, Kundankulam, Sawyerpuram and Puttataruvai.

In this juncture it is worth mentioning about a microlithic site found at Vembakottai, which is very near to Tiruttangal. This village lying on the banks of the river Vaippar, about 15 km from Sankarankoil near Sivakasi, has yielded valuable archaeological antiquities namely microlithic, shell bangle pieces and black and red potteries. Further exploration conducted here, has led to a remarkable discovery of fossilized elephant molar from a mound on the north bank of the river Vaippar. The experts of Geological Survey of India, Hyderabad identified it as a lower left elephant molar belonging to living Indian elephant.

The excavation at Tiruttangal has yielded a few microlithic tools, flakes and cores. At TRT-4 trench 2 microlithic tools and 4 microlithic flakes were recovered. The chief raw materials are chert, quartz and jasper.

Tiruttangal excavation is a good example for demarcating the microlithic and megalithic cultures based on antiquities unearthed.

Description of Microlithic Tools, Flakes and Cores (Plate 1)

1. Probably an arrow point, chert - incomplete
2. Microlithic flake, chert
3. Microlithic tool, probably a blade, chert
4. Microlithic flake-chert
5. Microlithic flake-quartz
6. Microlithic flake-chert
7. Core material-Jasper

CULTURAL SEQUENCE

This excavation has distinctively revealed two stratigraphical layers. The top brownish clay layer yielded black and red potsherds assigned to period II (megalithic) and the second layer to period - I (microlithic period).

MINOR ANTIQUITIES

1. Bead & Iron Pieces

Minor antiquities like bangle pieces, beads and iron pieces were collected. In trench-2, a glass bead was collected at a depth of 48 cm. It is blue in colour and bi-hexagonal in shape with truncated edge. The length of the bead is 1.5 cm. This excavation has yielded only one

iron piece, may be a portion of small knife. It was found in TRT - 1 at 23 cm depth. It was in highly corroded stage.

2. Bangle

Three glass bangle pieces and a shell bangle was collected in Tiruttangal excavation. The glass bangle pieces are black in colour with simple ornamental grooved lines.

MISCELLANEOUS

Other antiquities are brought under this heading. It includes grooved tile, Dupakalasam and a unique terracotta object.

1. Dupakalasam (Plate -2)

TRT-2 has yielded a terracotta object, which may be identified as Dupakalasam (Incense burner). It appears as a dish fastened to a stand. Total height of this object is 14.5 cm. The rim of the dish portion is moderately thick. Inner diameter and depth are 14.5 cm and 4 cm respectively.

2. Terracotta object

A unique coarse red rectangular terracotta object was unearthed in TRT - 2 at 34 cm depth. The length, breadth, and height of the object are 3.5, 3.5 and 4 cm. The upper

surface of the object with a slight engraving of lines resembles srivatsam.

3. Grooved Tile (Plate 2)

Few grooved tile pieces of coarse red variety found with a hole, probably for nail insertion were unearthed.

CONCLUSION

Tiruttangal excavation has yielded a good number of antiquities pertaining to megalithic and microlithic periods and clearly demarcates the cultural periods. Hence, on the basis of archaeological finds in this excavation, it is concluded that human occupation might have existed here since 8000 BCE.

PARTICIPANTS

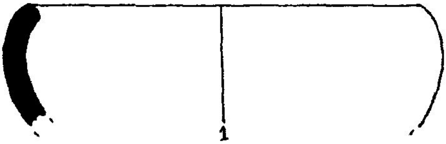
1. Thiru A.Abdul Majeed, the then Deputy Superintending Archaeologist
2. Thiru K.S. Sampath, Pre Historic Archaeologist
3. Thiru V.Vedhachalam, Curator
4. Thiru C.Santhalingam, Archaeological Officer
5. Thiru S.Sreekumar, Technical Assistant

6. Thiru P.Hariparanthaman, the then Draughtsman
7. Thiru M.T.Sridhar, Photographer
8. Pottery drawings by: Thiru V.Magudeswaran, the then Moulder
9. Thiru N.Balakrishnan, Asst. Photographer
10. Thiru N.Balachandran, Local person

Under the guidance and supervision of

Thiru Natana Kasinathan, the then Director of Archaeology.

Pottery Drawings
[Tiruttangal]



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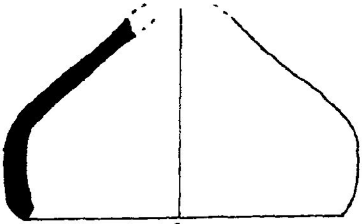

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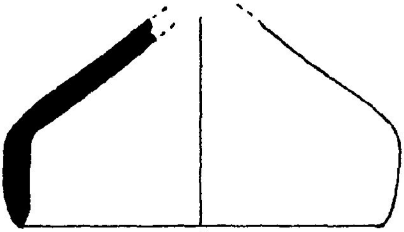

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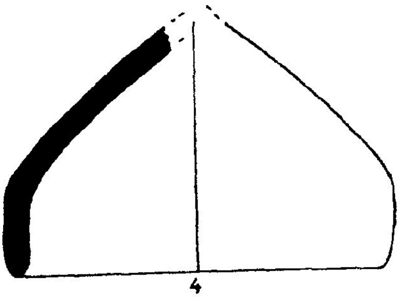

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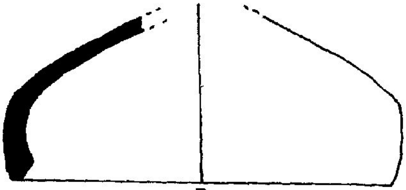
Pottery Drawings
[Tiruttangal]



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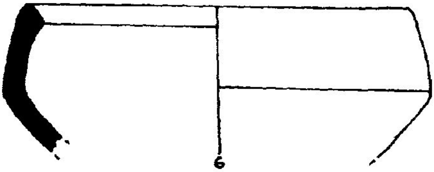

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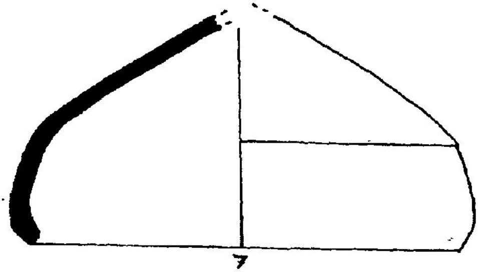

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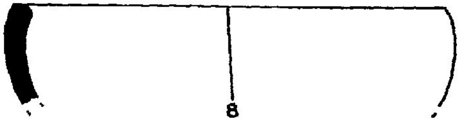

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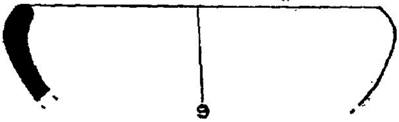

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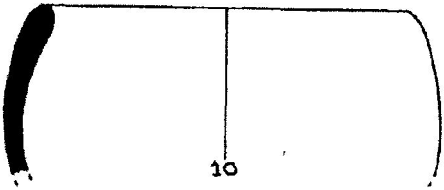
Pottery Drawings
[Tiruttangal]



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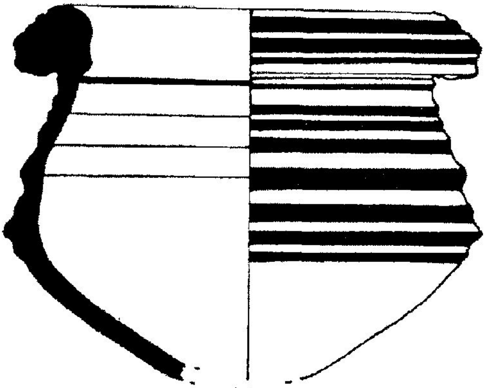

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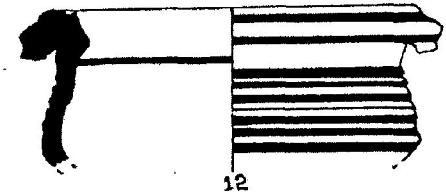

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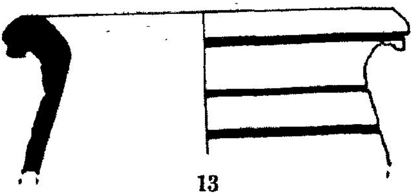
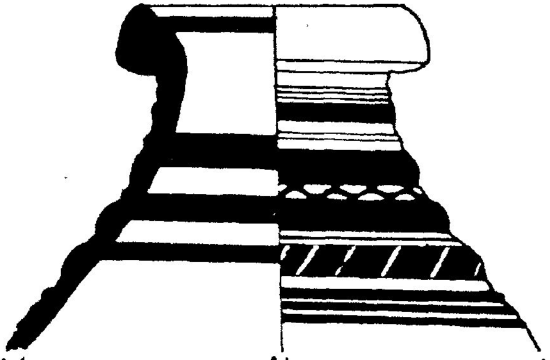


13

Pottery Drawings
[Tiruttangal]



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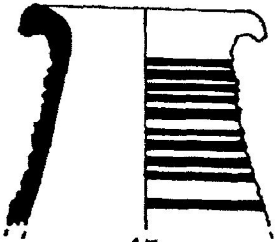

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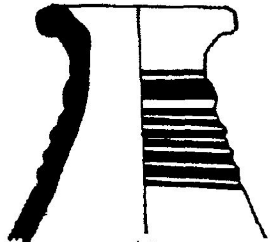

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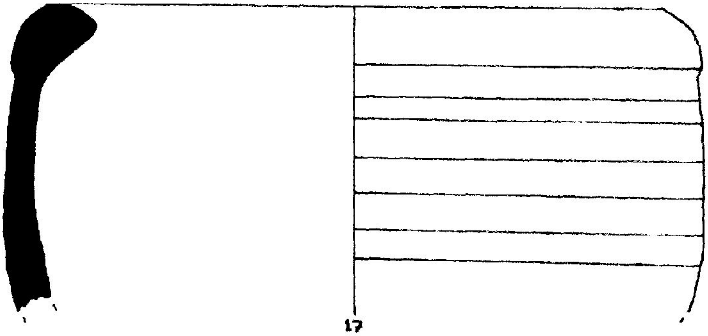
[Tiruttangal]



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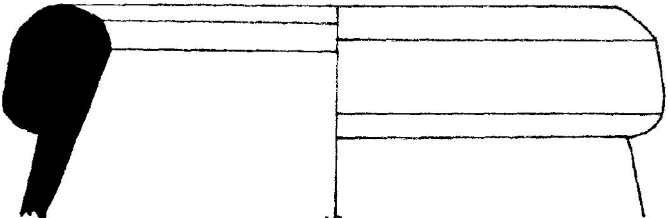

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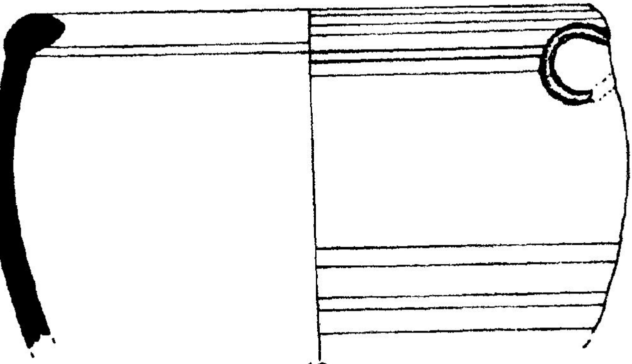

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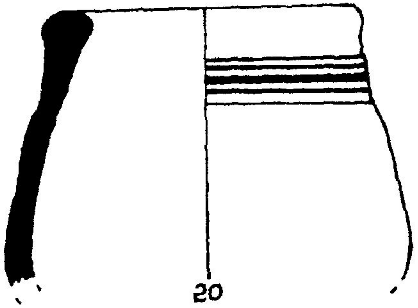

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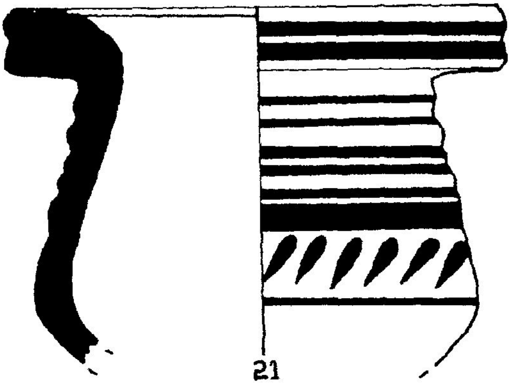

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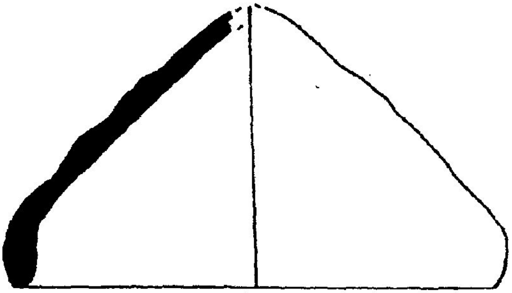

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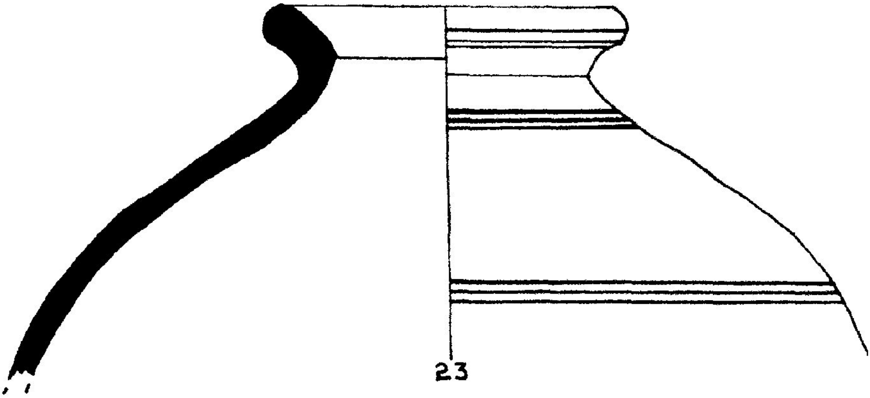
Pottery Drawings
[Tiruttangal]



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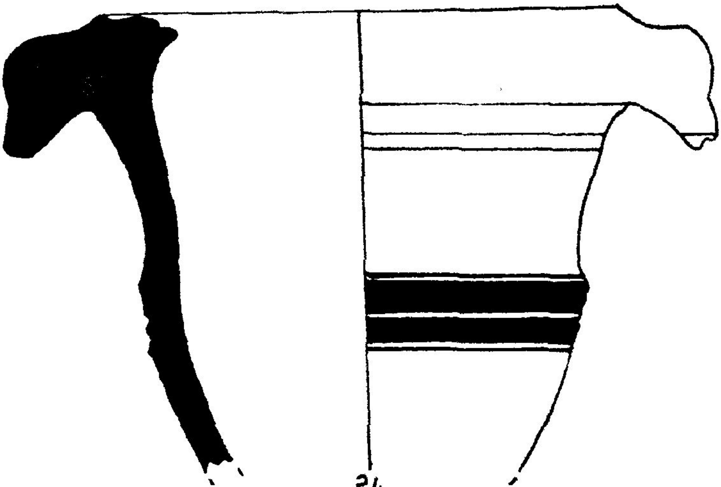
Pottery Drawings
[Tiruttangal]



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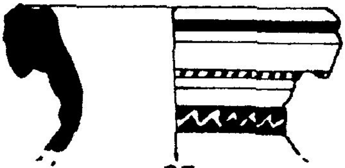

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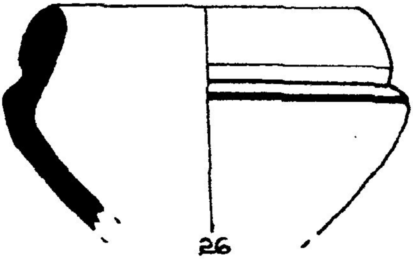

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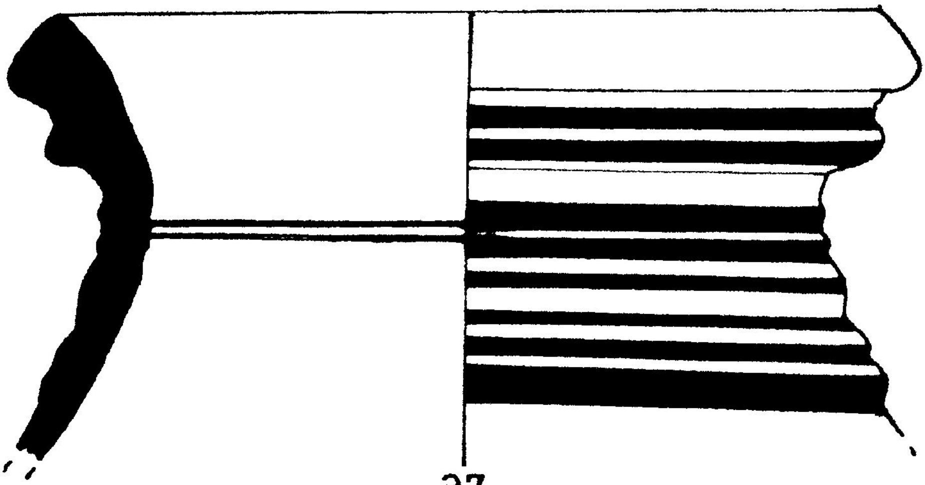

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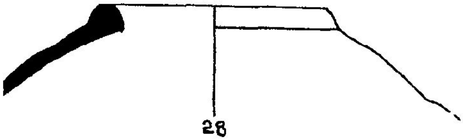
[Tiruttangal]



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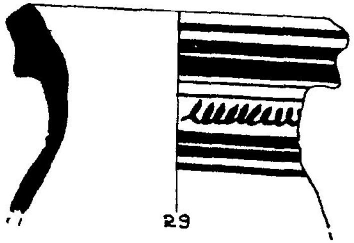

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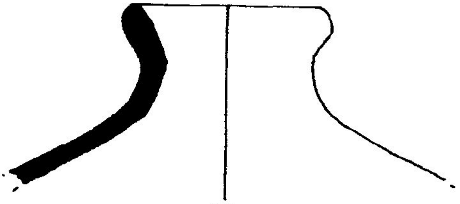

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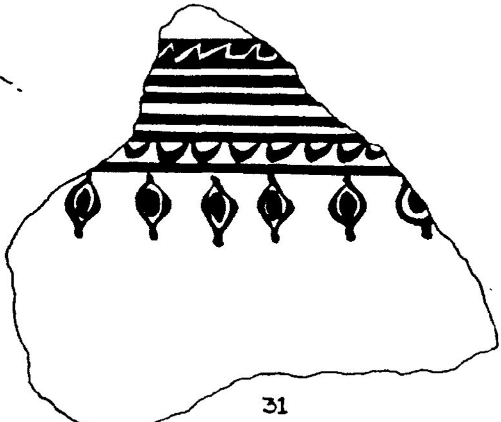

31

KOVALANPOTTAL

LOCATION

Kovalanpottal is situated at Pazhanganatham, a hamlet of Madakulam village in South Madurai. (Latitude of 9^0 56' N and Longitude of 78^0 08' E).

The history of this place goes back about 300 BCE. The great Tamil epic '*Silapathikaram*' describes about Madurai and the hero of this epic, Kovalan was beheaded at this place. A boulder called 'Vettu parai' (anvil for butchering) consecrated as temple is being still worshipped along with a head portion of a sculpture as Kannagi. To probe into the antiquity of this spot known as Kovalanpottal, the excavations were conducted in the year 1980 and three trenches measuring 4 meter square were laid.

Trench No.1

This trench was laid up to the depth of 2.5 metres, which had five layers of occupation. A large number of antiquities, like, potsherds and pieces of bones, a small quantity of iron bits, bangles made of glass and of conch, various kinds of beads, ear-rings, things made of copper, terracotta toys and implements belonging to the stone age

have been unearthed from this trench. The most significant among the findings were the three large urns. Each urn is of height of one meter. Of these, two are found with lids and the other had no lid but is covered with big stones. Around and top of the urns, earthen vessels, lids and mud pots were found. When one urn was opened, it was found to contain a skull, some human bones and potteries (Plate-3).

Trench No.2

Four urns were found, worth mentioning among the finds in this trench is a potsherd with Tamil script. Apart from glass bangles, terracotta discs, terracotta knob, handle of a pot's lid, pieces of bones and fine stone implements have been obtained. This trench was reached up to the depth of 2.5 metres.

Trench No.3

This was laid on the western side of the Kovalanpottal. This trench yielded potsherds, precious white stone, black terracotta discs, shell bangle pieces, iron nail and fine Neolithic implements. A test pit was dug up near this trench in the northern side. A bottom portion of a broken urn was obtained even at the sub-soil level; pieces of bones, earthen vessels and pot lids were also found.

POTTERIES

In this trench, earthen vessels with different types of rims were found; notable among them being the pots with a long neck and wide mouth concave pots, convex plates and pot lids. Each one of the potteries found inside the urns in the 1st trench was of a type different from the other. They were mainly of the black and red colours of burial pottery. The method of inverted firing was used in making the pots. Burnt by this process, the interior turns black due to radiation of heat.

Iron pieces were found in considerable quantity in all the three trenches between 35 cm and 95 cm depth and from above 45 cm to 65 cm depth. Small bits and sheets of iron have been found in plenty. In the first trench, a flat piece of iron resembling the head of an arrow was found at the depth of 44 cm. Further leaf shaped iron resembling the head of a lamp and elliptical sheets of iron at the depth of 53 cm were also noticed. An 'L' shaped nail was found at 95 cm depth in trench No.3

The presence of small iron pieces where the urn was obtained adds to the belief that people belonging to this period knew the usage of iron.

Copper coin

A square copper coin with symbol of a fish on one side was brought to surface from 45 cm depth in the 1st trench. Only four straight lines have been used to form the figure of the fish.

Chain

A chain made of copper wire was obtained in the 2nd trench. Only a part of the chain is available. This piece measuring 17 cm in length was found at the depth of 43 cm.

Beads

A heart-shaped precious white stone was found at 61 cm depth. One side of this stone is flat; the other side is in convex shape. This might have been a beautifying dollar in a necklace. Another find is a steatite bead in cylindrical shape.

Finger Rings

A hexagonal copper ring surrounded by small stones, with a bigger stone lay in the center. This splendid ornament was found at 40 cm depth in the first trench.

Shell bangle

Parts of two bangles made of shell have been found. Two shell bangles pieces with a small vertical line, decorated and some with criss-cross pattern design were found.

Pot with Tamil Script (Plate - 4)

Two broken mud-pots with Tamil Brahmi Scripts like ' அ[..] த ' and 'அ த் த' were found on the top of urn in the 2nd trench.

CONCLUSION

The excavation at Kovalanpottal reveals the megalithic culture and the mode of burial that existed in those times. The excavation was conducted in the year 1980-81.

PARTICIPANTS

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Under the guidance of

Dr. R. Nagaswamy, the then Director of Archaeology.

ANAMALAI

LOCATION

The Superintending Engineer of the Parambikulam-Aliyar project drew the attention of this department to the existence of a dolmen at Manamboli, a village in the Anamalai hills. (Latitude of 10^0 35' N and Longitude of 76^0 56' E). The dolmen was on a road under formation. The Superintending Engineer first considered it necessary to remove the dolmen to avoid a sharp turning in the road. This department undertook the excavation of the dolmen to facilitate the road formation. Sri. S.R.Rao, the then Superintendent of Archaeology, ASI, was kind enough to depute Sri K.V.Raman, Technical Assistant and a draftsman to assist this Department in the excavation.

The dolmen consisted of three upright slabs. The capstone was not found. The dolmen was covered with shrubs and anthills. These were cleared. A circular trench was laid. The excavation revealed that treasure hunters had robbed the dolmen earlier, probably. Nevertheless, it threw sufficient light on the erection of the dolmen and the mode of interment. The dolmen consisted of a single flooring slab and four upright slabs. The front slab was found fallen, broken into three pieces. The rear portion

consisted of two slabs placed in a line. At the northern portion a 'U' shaped cutting about 60 cm depth and 40 cm width was provided to facilitate depositing of the funerary objects, after the capstone was placed. The rear slab was sealed by another vertical slab, held in position by heavy rubble packing. The rubble at the back was heaped and concentrated. The rear slab was not exactly at the end of the side slabs, but 100 cm inside. The packing at this gap was dense. A part of the capstone was found lying inside the dolmen, above 20 cm, over the flooring slab. In this position the slab seems to have been roused by some, probably for cooking, as evidenced by the presence of carbonaceous material. This shows that, after the dolmen had been tampered with it was used by human agencies.

A three mt. square was formed around the dolmen with partly dressed stones. The outer faces were in alignment while the inner faces were irregular in their shapes. In between the upright slabs and the square lay out the space was filled with only earth, no rubble was found. Outside the square, rubble of various sizes was found. Only a small piece of iron point, probably of a pointed knife was found during the excavation. A few pieces of black and red ware pottery of insignificant size and shape were found.

It is evident that first a square layout was made and the dolmen erected in the middle. The interment was effected after the capstone was placed in position. After the interment the passage at the back was sealed and packed with rubble. Finally the rubble was covered with earth (Plate-5).

The dolmen was not completely removed, as the engineering authorities have diverted the road, and preserve this relic of ancient occupation insitu.

There are no dolmens in the vicinity of this hill. About 2.5 metres to the south of this site, on the hill, are found dolmen-like structures. Two are intact, while a third had fallen down. Those that are intact consist of a flat slab placed over two or three short, stout slabs of irregular shape. The whole is placed immediately over the rock and there are no encircling stones, rubble, potsherds or bones etc. Probably, these were made as seats by the hill dwellers. The fallen one, appears to be a dolmen but has no appendages.

CONCLUSION

The excavation revealed the mode of burial system

during the megalithic period in Kongu region. The excavation was carried out during the year 1969.

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THONDI

LOCATION

Early history of the Tamils reveals that Thondi, on the shore of the Arabian Sea, (Latitude of 9^0 44' 20" N and Longitude of 79^0 01' 13" E). was a flourishing port of the Cheras. The Sangam classics, *Ahananuru, Narrinai, Ingurunuru, Kurunthogai, Padirruppathu* and *Purananuru* praise the importance of Thondi in the west coast, in about 23 verses[(1)]. Besides, "The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea" (90 CE) and "The Geography of Ptolemy" (140 CE) also refer to Thondi in the Chera country[(2)]. These accounts call it as 'Tindis'. As in the case of the Chera country, the Pandyas too had a port, by the name of Thondi, in the eastern coast (on the shore of Bay of Bengal). As it is not mentioned in the sangam works, its antiquity is not traceable. Thondi of the Pandyas is referred only in the later works like *Silappadikaram, Pandikovai* and *Yapperunkalak-karigai Urai*. The post Sangam Tamil epic, *Silappadikaram* describes Thondi as a place where wind entered from the east. It states that the eastern wind entered Madurai with the sweet smell of Ahil, Tuhil, Aram and camphor, which had come down to the Thondi port in the Bay of Bengal(3).

"ஓங்கிரும் பரப்பின்
வங்க ஈட்டத்துக் தொண்டியோர் இட்ட
அகிலும் துகிலும் ஆரமும் வாசமும்
தொருகருப்பூரமும் சுமந்துடன் வந்த
கொண்டலோடு புகுந்து கோமகன் கூடல்
வெங்கண் நெடுவேள் வில்விழா காணும்
பங்குனி முயக்கத்துப் பனியரசு"

"Onkirum parappin
Vanga Iittattut Thondiyor itta
Ahilum tuhilum aramum vasamum
Torukaruppuramum sumanthudan vantha
Kondalodu puhuntu komahan kudal
Venkan neduvel vilvizha kanum
Pankuni muyakkatup paniyarasu"

Adiyarukku Nallar, in his commentary on *Silappadikaram* mentions "Thondiyor" as the Chola lineage. But this identification is not feasible and *Silappadikaram* has no further source for it. The word 'Thondiyor' must have referred to the Pandyas only. This is evident from the verses of *Silappadikaram,* which refer to the wind of the eastern region that entered into the

capital of the Pandyas. It may not be acceptable to presume that the wind of the Chola country entered into the Pandya capital. From this, one can infer that the port of Thondi, in the east coast, must have flourished, as an important place even during the 3rd to 4th Centuries CE; there is no evidence to believe that this port was in existence prior to this period.

During the Sangam age there were two important ports of the Pandyas, which had trade contacts with the foreigners. They were Alagankulam and Korkai. The first one was located south of Thondi at the confluence of the river Vaigai with the sea and the second one was at the mouth of the river Tamiraparani in Tuticorin district. When these ports began to loose their importance, Thondi might have become an important port in the Tiruvadani Taluk of the present Ramanathapuram District.

The commentary on *Irayanar Ahapporul* alludes to one category of literature called *Pandikkovai,* which speaks about the familiar relationship of the Pandya ruler Nedumaran, who reigned in the 7th Century CE. It is also identifies Thondi, in the east coast, as a Pandya port[4].

"மீனவன் தொண்டி "Minavan Thondi"

நறையாற்று...வேல்கொண்ட கோன் தொண்டி
Narayarru....Velkonda kon Thondi"

மாறன்... தொண்டி கானல்" Maran....Thondi kanal"

Kalaviyarkarihai refers to "Mannan Madurakan Thondi"[5]. A verse in the *Yapperunkalakkarihai Urai* calls the port city as "Varagunan Thondi". Varguna Pandya seems to have reigned during the 9th century CE. *Nandikkalambaham* praises the Pallava king Nandivarma III for his conquest of Thondi[6].

Though it is an exaggerated version it provides a clue to presume that this port might have flourished as a strategic place between the age of *Silappadikaram* and 9th century CE. There were constant conflicts among the Pandya, Ceylonese and the Chola rulers. During this time Thondi became the centre of action for these rivals. It is said that the king of Ceylon captured Thondi and then moved towards Madurai. The Arppakkam inscription mentions that the Chola army was able to drive out the Ceylonese army in the battle, which took place at Thondi[7].

During the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries CE at the time of the later Pandya rule, Thondi seems to have had trade contacts with the eastern countries. This is evident from the discovery of Chinese celadon wares in this region. During the Vijayanagara Nayak rule Thondi became a part of the Madurai Nayak territory and subsequently came under the control of the Setupatis of Ramnad, Zamindars of Sivaganga and the British administration. An epigraphy, found at Thondi, refers to the dominant position of the Marudhu brothers of Sivaganga in that region[8]. At the time of the British occupation many goods were transported from Burma through the port of Thondi. The Nagarattar of Nattukkottai imported Burma teak through this port. There were passenger ship transport, with a capacity of taking 200 passengers, between Thondi and Ceylon[9]. Thondi seems to have lost its significance after the emergence of Tuticorin port and the extension of railway line to Dhanushkodi in 1914. Today it is a small village unmindful of its past glory.

Thondi is located on the south of Rameswaram in the "Sethu Markkam". It is situated 115 kilometers east of Madurai. Thondi means 'Katarkali'. It lies adjacent to the estuary and hence the name Thondi. There are references

to Thondi, in the Sangam works, as 'Kanalanthondi'. It means a place, that is cut off and separated by the sea[10]. Later Pandya inscriptions found in the Siva temple at Thondi and Kaikkalankulam refer to this place as Thondi alias Pavithiramanickappatinam, which means pure and chaste monarch, Rajaraja I (as one of his title). It is presumed that this place seems to have gained much importance during the Chola rule. Kaikkalankulam (tank) of Thondi is referred to in an inscription of Virapandya as 'Kalikanakkulam'. There is a sluice in this tank and an inscription found here which mentions that the Marudhu brothers in 1795 CE set up the sluice.

EXCAVATION

In 1980, the excavation was conducted to locate the historical Thondi which was mentioned in the post Sangam literatures with that of Thondi, the east coast. The excavation brought to light plenty of potteries of the Middle Ages. A trial trench with a measurement 4 x 4 meters was made in the "Thondiyamman Koil Mound" located to the north of the village.

This Trench had a depth of 1.50 metres; there are no different types of layers found in the Trench. The layer of sea soil alone was noticed. There was no antiquity found beneath 1.50 metres depth. Potteries of the medieval alone were collected from the Trench. There were no black and red ware potteries of megalithic period found in the excavation. A copper coin of Rajaraja-I, and two copper coins of Nayak were also collected form the Trench. A round shaped terracotta ear ornament, a hip-hop and a coral jewel with black and green stone beads were also found in the trench.

The excavation at Thondi revealed that this place was an important habitation site as well as a flourishing port during the medieval times. The coins of Rajaraja-I and the Nayak rulers found here indicate the continuation of the trade activities of the people.

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10) Ilakkiyathipam, p .165

PARTICIPANTS

1. Thiru M.Chandramoorthy, the then Registering officer, Madurai,

2. Thiru V.Vedhachalam, Curator, Madurai

Under the guidance of

Dr.R.Nagaswamy, the then Director of Archaeology

KORKAI

LOCATION

Korkai, now a tiny village situated at Srivaikuntam taluk of Tirunelveli district, lies at a distance of three kilometres to the north of the Tamraparani river (Latitude of 8^0 38' 20" N and Longitude of 78^0 03' 34" E). The sea a originally bordering the village has receded in recent times and is now about six kilometres to the east. The river Tamraparani skirted this town in ancient times and emptied itself into the sea here. Thus it formed a natural port in ancient period. Adicchanallur, the famous urn burial site is only about 15 kilometre from Korkai village and is situated on the banks of the same river. Korkai also lies only three kilometres from Sawyerpuram, the Teri site known for its Microlithic industry.

Korkai was a capital and an important port of the Pandyas in the centuries preceding the Christian era. The Tamil Sangam classics and the classical geographers of the west have left copious references to this port. The Tamil classics assignable to the second century BCE to the first century CE refer to Korkai as a far famed port, (Pugal mali Sirappir Korkai Munturai), the port of the Pandya ruler Valuti of beautiful chariots (Narrer Valuti Korkai Munrurai),

and the capital of the Pandya ruler of Vetrivel cheliyan. The Pandya rulers are frequently referred to as the lords of Korkai (Korkai Koman) and the ruler of Korkai (Korkaivendu). Ptolemy refers to the place as the "country of the Kareoi"; "in the Kolkhic gulf, where there is pearl fishery, Sosi Kourai, Kolhoi, an emporium and mouth of the river Solen". The following reference is seen in the Periplus: "From Comari towards the south this region extends to Colchi (Korkai) where the pearl fisheries are; (they are worked by condemned criminals) and belongs to the Pandyan Kingdom."

PREVIOUS EXCAVATION

It was Rev. Dr. Caldwell, who identified the present village with ancient Korkai and drew the attention of scholars to its importance to South Indian history. Dr. Caldwell conducted some excavations in 1876 and published his findings in Indian Antiquary in 1877. He was more struck by the geology of the place than its antiquities. He found a number of urns of which one was eleven feet in circumference and contained an entire set of human bones including a perfect skull. The site has also attracted the attention of Sir Mortimer Wheeler while he was the Director General of Archaeology in India.

EXCAVATION (Plate-6)

The present excavation (1968 - 69) was undertaken with a view to assess the archaeological potentialities of the site and its cultural sequence.

CULTURAL SEQUENCE

The present excavation at Korkai has revealed consecutive periods of occupation of three main periods: period I dating back to the urn burial period, period II the Pandya period and period III the post Pandya period. Period I is characterised by the occurrence of urns of megalithic variety and its associated black and red ware, black ware and red ware, shell bangle pieces, cornelian beads and bone ornaments. Period II is marked by the occurrence of red ware, red slipped ware, black ware and brown ware, sawed conches, terracotta objects like beads, spouted potsherds etc. Period III is characterised by the occurrence of red wares and black wares of coarse variety.

Period I	: 3rd Century BCE - 4th Century CE
Period II	: 4th Century CE - 10th Century CE
Period III	: 10th Century CE - 14th Century CE

THE CUTTINGS

In the first season seven trenches were laid and in the second season KRK - 8,9,10,11 and 12 were laid.

KRK I

It was laid at the western end of the present Korkai. The trench measuring 3.65 x 2.75 metre was excavated up to the soil. A medieval copper coin of Rajaraja I was found in the upper layers. An urn, completely crushed was found at a depth of 2.54 m. In the same level of this urn was found the N.B.P. type ware. The trench also yielded a finely facetted crystal bead.

KRK 2

To the south of the village road, near the Vanni tree, the trench measuring 2.5 m. square was laid. According to local tradition, the area near the vanni tree contained fabulous treasure buried deep into the earth. A burial urn of black and red ware, small in size was encountered at a depth of 1.62 m. The urn contained no bones or other interment.

KRK 3

At the southern end of the village in the midst of Korkai tank, a trench of 5.70 m square was laid. Almost at the

surface level was found the foundation of a rectangular structure. The foundation at the southern end consisted of a row of dressed granite laid over river sand. At the western end it consisted of three courses of bricks of irregular shape laid in lime mortar over pieces of grid stone and river sand. The inner side of the structure was paved with pieces of grid stone of irregular shapes, lying over a spread of river sand. The foundation is obviously of a late medieval structure.

KRK 4

Immediately to the north of the village road, near the Panchayat Office, a trench 2.5 m.square was laid. This area was completely covered with thorny bushes before excavation. A brick structure lying east west, with steps from the north at the western end was noticed. The structure consisted of two rows of bricks in nine courses of headers. The bricks were laid in mud plaster immediately below the steps at the northern end. A heap of shells were found stored. Below the structure three large sized rings, placed one over the other (probably soakage jars) were noticed. For placing the rings a pit has been dug and the rings have been placed in position. The contents of the rings could not be ascertained as the brick structure immediately overlies the rings. The rings have been held

in position by broken potsherds, conches, grindstones and other stray objects.. The broken potsherds found inside the ring well belong to the medieval period coarse variety. Both the brick structure and the soakage rings seem to be contemporary. The purpose of their construction is not clear. However, the same trench yielded in other layers a number of inscribed potsherds bearing Brahmi characters assignable from 3rd Century BCE to 2nd Century CE. At the lowest level excavated (2.69 metre) a hearth of clay was found. Charcoal samples collected from this hearth are datable to 785 BCE.

KRK 6 and 7

These were the extension of excavation of KRK 4 in the west and northern direction to find out whether the structure extended further. The extension on the southern side showed a large heap of shell in the layer immediately below the structure. Nothing significant was found in both the trenches.

KRK 5

A trench of 2.5 m. square was laid in the west of the village. The excavation revealed seven layers. Two rows of soakage jars, placed side by side were found with four jars placed one over the other in the east and two in the west.

They contained a few bone pieces and black and red ware potsherds. A few inscribed potsherds were also found in this trench.

KRK 8

This trench with 3 m. square was laid, which yielded graffiti potsherds bearing ladder symbol and few sawed conches at the depth of 1.30 m. and 2.13 m. respectively.

KRK 9

In the square Trench covering an area of 3 m, good number of shell bangle pieces and sawed conches were found.

KRK 10

The 3 m. square Trench yielded graffiti potsherds bearing Trisula and Triangle symbols, sawed conches, terracotta gamesman, shell bangle pieces, and a central portion of a conch which is worked for making ornament.

KRK 11

Trench 11 which also measured 3 m. square has yielded sawed conches, graffiti potsherds and decorated shell bangle pieces.

KRK 12

In the 3 m. square trench, graffiti potsherds, ring stand, and sawed conches were recovered.

Potsherds with inscriptions

Potsherds with inscriptions of 3rd century BCE to 2nd century CE have been found in the excavated Trenches. Inscriptions were found in black ware, red-slipped ware and black and red ware. All the inscriptions are fragmentary. The letters are in Brahmi characters. These letters are commonly found in various caves of Tamilnadu and on potsherds from excavated sites like Arikkamedu, Uraiyur, Kodumanal, Alagarai, Kanchipuram, Karur, Vallam, Alagankulam, Teriruveli, Maligaimedu, and Mangudi.

Generally all letters are in early forms. However one sherd bearing two letters is in square form, resembling late Amaravati characters. In one potsherd the inscription is found in two lines. The readings are given below:

S.No.	Trench	Depth	Reading
1.	KRK-4	1.30 m.	ta O த ஒ
2.	"	1.44 "	(cā?) na ta na –(சா?)ந த ந
3.	"	1.50 "	mā ti pa la –மா தி ப ல -
4.	"	2.44 "	sa ta - ஸ த
5.	KRK-5	1.05 "	ki dā (bha?) (ne)–கி தா பா நெ
6.	"	1.23 "	vā na - வா ந ti ya na - தி ய ந
7.	"	2.06 "	sā ye - ஸா யெ
8.	KRK-6	0.43 "	tā ne tā a - டா நெ டா அ

GRAFFITI MARKS (Plate - 7)

A large number of potsherds with graffiti marks were found. The symbols on potsherds like swastika, trisulam, sun, star, triangles, ladder, boat, bow and arrow, leaf and fish are noteworthy. The graffiti marks range from simple to complex strokes, curves and lines. The graffiti marks are mostly thin, incised after firing, and commonly found in the ancient sites of Tamilnadu.

SAWED CONCHES

The conches were sawed in between the top and

bottom portion in order to make bangles; they were found in all the Trenches. The centre portion of the conch is sawed in such a way as to prepare a core for making rings. The literary evidence about shell bangle making was proved by the occurrence of shell bangle pieces, rings, sawed conches and pearl oysters. The regular appearance of conches and sawed conches, and shell bangle pieces in the trenches of all periods of this site confirm the continuous existence of the conch bangle making industry and pearl fishery at Korkai.

MINOR ANTIQUITIES

Apart from conch bangle pieces, glass bangle pieces, beads of shell, semi precious stones, steatite, paste, copper, terracotta were also unearthed from Korkai. Iron nails, terracotta ear ornaments and bone arrowheads were the other minor antiquities found in the excavation.

CONCLUSION

The excavation yielded two burial urns, one of them completely crushed and the other in fairly good state of preservation. A brick structure was found superimposed on a ring well (or soakage jar). Inscribed potsherds with Brahmi characters assignable to the second century BCE

to second century CE were found in considerable number. One particular sherd with high black polish deserves special mention. Some scholars opine that it is a Northern Black Polished (NBP) ware while others hold that it is a special variety of rouletted ware. Since it is a solitary specimen, future excavations may throw further light. If the suggestion that it is an N.B.P. is accepted, then it is for the first time that an N.B.P. ware is found in Tamilnadu proper - that too in the extreme south. Large quantity of pearl oysters found during the excavation, testify that it was an important centre of pearl fishery. The **Carbon-14** date of Korkai was 2755 ± 95 years that is about 785 BCE.

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3. Thiru A.Abdul Majeed, the then Epigraphist
4. Thiru M.Chandramoorthy, the then Archaeologist

Under the guidance of

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Reference

Damilica - Journal of the Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology, December 1970

PALLAVAMEDU

LOCATION

Palavamedu is situated in Kanchipuram District (Latitude of $12^{0}50'$ N and Longitude of $79^{0}43'$ E). A mound on the outskirts of Kanchipuram, is traditionally believed to contain relics of the Pallavas. The trial excavation was conducted by the southern circle of the Archaeological Survey of India in the year 1953-54. The excavation revealed four successive structural periods, the lowest of which contained some fragmentary ring wells, and coeval with what purported to be an urn-internment. The upper three phases could be distinguished from one another only on the basis of the superimposition of structures, there being no difference in pottery. Bangles made of shell were found in profusion in different stages of manufacture proving that the site itself might have been a factory for their production. The excavation was carried out in the year 1970-71 which revealed three periods of occupation.

EXCAVATION

Period - I

It was characterized by the occurrence of red wares in varying colour, a terracotta human figurine, and shell

bangles. In the lowest level, the strata indicated that the river Vegavathi was flowing very near the site during the period of the Pallavas (6th to 9th century CE). The present course of the river flows about 2½ kilometres away. A storage jar, found at a depth of 5.85 m below the surface on the sandy bank was probably used for washing cloths (Plate - 8).

Period - II

It was marked by two structural phases represented by a mud platform and flooring. In the upper flooring were found two hearths showing traces of burning. Notable finds include potsherds with graffiti marks, red and black wares and beads of crystal and glass.

Period - III (Plate - 9)

It was distinguished by the occurrence of glass beads; stucco pieces, a tiny linga and pottery of the same class as that of the earlier period. The structural remains of the period consisted of a big dump extending to 20 meters. This phenomenon obviously represents the debris of a building towards the end of the Pallava rule in circa 9th century CE.

CONCLUSION

The excavation revealed that this site has link with Pallava rule to a limited extent from 6th to 9th century CE.

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REFERENCE

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BOLUVAMPATTI

Boluvampatti at the foothills of Western Ghats is situated 22 kms from Coimbatore city in Coimbatore District (Latitude of 10° 57' 54" N and Longitude of 76° 47' 54" E). It is on the western banks of the river Noyyal. It is now a hamlet adjoining the Siva temple Nageswara of Muttam. The excavation was conducted at Kottaikadu 3 kms from Boluvampatti village situated on the west bank of river Kanchi popularly known as Kanchiaru. The surface exploration yielded a large number of beautiful terracotta figurines of 5th – 6th centuries CE. The inscriptions found in the Nageswara temple dating back to 11th – 12th centuries CE, referred to Boluvampatti as a Brahmin settlement called as Amarapujanga Chaturvedimangalam. Some terracotta figurines were collected, and they look like Jain or Buddhist Yaksha figurines (Plate - 11); on the basis of which the excavation was carried out in the year 1979-1980.

CUTTINGS

Excavations were conducted at three places – the first trench - BLP 1 was laid out on plain ground, while the other two trenches BLP - 2 and 3 were on small disturbed mound.

BLP – 1

There were no antiquities and potteries found in the trench BLP – 1.

BLP – 2

Five layers were noticed in BLP – 2. This trench yielded about 50 semi-precious stone beads of various sizes and also large number of terracotta earlobes. The trench also yielded iron objects, shell bangle pieces, an important terracotta seal obtained from the bottom portion of a pit filled by terracotta lids and cups. Most probably the pit might have been used as kiln for firing the pots (Plate- 10).

An interesting find of this trench was a terracotta seal. It depicts a bow and a seated tiger with an inscription of 7th century CE characters. It bears the emblems of Chera, Chola and Pandya kings namely, bow and arrow, tiger and fish with grantha inscription running along the border. The letters are illegible, but a few can be made out ending with the word “Varman”. The seal appears to have been used on the bales of cotton or cloth by the merchants. Such a practice is referred to in *‘Silappathikaram’* as “Manpori”. Large amount of charcoal bits were also collected from this trench showing fibres of burnt bamboo.

A Brahmi potsherd with letters " ரன் கொற்றி " and another potsherd with Vatteluthu character read as 'ங்கு சவை விற்றி குழி' were found. Two punch marked coins dated to 4th century CE were also unearthed from this trench (Plate-10).

BLP-3

It is laid very near to the trench BLP-2. This trench yielded about 200 semi-precious stone beads, 10 terracotta beads, shell bangle pieces, and animal bones. Post-holes also noticed in this trench.

CONCLUSION

A thick deposit of about four feet of ash in the mound suggest that the commercial settlement on the banks of river Kanchi might be destroyed by fire.

PARTICIPANTS

1. Thiru R.Poongundran, the then Registering Officer, Coimbatore
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Reference

Excavations at Perur, Department of Archaeology Publication, 2003 pp 8-9.

PANAYAKULAM

LOCATION

Panayakulam, a small village situated in Dharmapuri district, lies on the way from Papparapatti to Palakodu, about 4 kilometres from Papparapatti (Latitude of12^0 13' N and Longitude of $78^0$03-' E).

EXPLORATION

An archaeologically important mound is noticed on the way to Panayakulam where antiquities like potsherds, terracotta figurines, bones, and bricks (38x20x7 cm) were collected. A large number of terracotta figurines assignable to 8th century CE was also collected (Plate - 12).

Epigraphs

Panayakulam was in continuous occupation from 6th century CE to 12th century CE that was proved by the epigraphs found in this mound. Two hero stones dated to 16th century CE, noticed by this department and are kept at Dharmapuri site Museum. Another fragmentary hero stone of the *7th* century CE *in vatteluthu characters* was found on the bund of the lake.

The inscriptions refer to the existence of Jain or Buddhist monastery, which was referred in the epigraphs

as Palli at Panayakulam village. The records of nearby villages also mention the existence of Palli at Panayakulam. A hero stone at Kantharapatti belonging to Rajaraja-I in his 27th regnal year records the death of a person named Puliyakamundan son of Visvakamundan who is mentioned as an ascetic from Panayakulam Palli in Tagadur Nadu in Ganganadu situated in Nigarilicholomandalam.

A stone inscription found in a sluice near the Panayakulam lake, of Rajendra -I in his 22nd regal year mentions that a person called Velkaliyan cholavarman alais Madurantakavelan made this sluice.

EXCAVATION

Trial excavation was carried out in the mound, which is disturbed due to cultivation. At the depth of 50 cm coarse red ware potsherds were found and in some places bone pieces were also collected. The soil was clayey, at a depth of 3 m. where some brick pieces were found. Few black and red ware potteries with rough surface, red slipped ware, black ware, thick-mouthed potteries and hip-hops were the other varieties of potteries found.

CONCLUSION

The excavation proves that this mound was in continuous occupation from 6th century CE to 12th century CE.

PARTICIPANTS

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2. Thiru C.Santhalingam, the then Archaeological Officer, Dharmapuri

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REFERENCE

1. Historic terracottas from Dharmapuri - R.Poongundran, South Indian studies Vol.1 Dr.R.Nagasamy - Page 173 - 178. (Ed.)
2. Dharmapuri District Inscriptions Vol.II

KURUMBANMEDU

LOCATION

A small mound called Kurumbanmedu is situated in the western side and about 3 kms from Brahadeeswara temple at Thanjavur (Latitude of 10^{0} 47' N and Longitude of 79^{0} 08' E). This mound is 3 metres height and it is very near to another archaeologically important mound Chekadimedu.

EXCAVATION

Imperial cholas ruled and administered entire Tamil Nadu from Thanjavur as their capital. The mound at Kurumbanmedu was intended to excavate to find out the ruined remains of the imperial Cholas.

KRM-1

Two trenches were laid in Kurumbanmedu. This trench was laid from east to west with 5x4 metres extent. The natural soil was reached at the depth of 100 cm. This site was marked with three layers and yielded iron objects, terracotta lids, and British porcelain ware. From 1st layer to 3rd layer medieval tiles were found. The potsherds collected from this trench were coarse red war and red ware pieces. Some brickbats and pebbles were also collected. The potsherd seems to be eroded by water erosion.

KRM-2

This trench was laid about 100 m. distance from KRM 1, in the western side. The excavation was carried out to the extent of 5x4 metres. The excavation was carried up to the level of 105 cms and four layers were noticed. The antiquities found were iron objects, decorated potsherds, iron nails, glass bangles, terracotta spouts, terracotta beads, and porcelain ware. The potteries were coarse variety of brown slipped ware, and red ware (plate-12).

CHRONOLOGY

The layers 4th and 3rd marked as period I, and layers 2nd and 1st were marked as period II.

Period I - 10th century CE to 14th century CE

Period II - 14th century CE onwards

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PALAYARAI

INTRODUCTION

Palayarai, now in the Kumbakonam taluk of the Thanjavur District, (Latitude of 10^{0} 55' N and Longitude of 79^{0} 21' E) was the secondary capital city of medieval Cholas. Once a flourishing city, now it is a small village with the name Kilpalayarai. It is situated about 7 km away to the south of Kumbakonam, the names of some hamlets around Kilpalayarai such as Nulaiyur (entrance of the city), Chola-maligai (palace of Cholas), Rajendranpettai (named after Rajendrachola) etc. They show that they might have been the parts of the royal city during Chola times. Four villages have the suffix 'Padaiyur' (army station) to their names, i.e., Pampapadaiyur, Arya-padaiyur, Mamma-Padaiyur, and Pudup-Padaiyur. It is evidently presumed that the ancient city Palayarai had four army stations, on its four sides and it might have been extended from Darasuram in the north to Nandanmedu in the south.

This place was called as 'Nandipuri' or 'Nandipuram' during the Pallava period. It was the regional headquarters of Nandivarman II and was referred to as Palayarai in Devaram hymns. Palayarai was called by various names in

different periods. During the period of Rajaraja I, it was called as Palayarai alias Nandipuram and after as Mudikondacholapuram after the surname of Rajendra I. Still later inscriptions mention it as Agavamalla Kulakalapuram. Rajaraja II (1146 CE) made Palayarai as one of his capital cities and named it as Rajarajapuram.

Chola inscriptions give valuable information about the existence of massive palaces and quarters of the city of Palayarai. In the inscriptions of Rajendra I, the palace at Palayarai is referred to as Madurantagan Tirumaligai (S.I.I.vol. VII, No. 125); some other inscriptions refer to some parts of the palace such as Adibhumi i.e. ground floor (S.I.I.Vol. XXIII No. 257), Rajendracholan mandapam (ARE. 168 of 1910).

EXPLORATION

Explorations were undertaken at Nandanmedu and Cholan-maligai in the year 1964-65 and some megalithic urns and brick structures of the chola period were discovered by the Department of Ancient History and Archeology, University of Madras (IAR. 1964-65 p.24)

Surface exploration carried out at Nandanmedu, Nathankoil, Kil-Palayarai and Cholan-maligai, revealed

good number of antiquities belonging to medieval chola period.

EXCAVATION

To assess the archaeological potentialities of the site and to bring out the remains of the Chola palace, systematic excavations were undertaken at Kil-Palayarai in the year 1984.

CULTURAL SEQUENCE

Three trenches were laid at Kil-Palayarai to study the stratigraphy of the habitational deposits of the place and to determine their cultural sequence. Based on the occurrence of pottery types, two successive occupational periods were determined.

Period I represents the early medieval culture characterized by the occurrence of the crude variety of black and red ware, red ware and painted sherds.

Period II represent the late medieval culture and is distinguished by the occurrence of coarse red ware, black ware, decorated sherds, porcelain sherds and rectangular roofing tiles.

CHRONOLOGY

On the basis of the occurrence of the pottery types and other associated antiquities, a relative chronology is fixed for the above two periods.

Period I : 400 CE to 800 CE

Period II : 800 CE to 1400 CE

CUTTINGS

Totally three trenches were laid and numbered as PRI - 1, 2 & 3.

PRI - 1

The first trench was laid on the plain surface of the mound at southeastern side of Somanathasami temple. In this trench, three layers were met with. Layer 1 consisted of loose brownish earth mixed with large number of potsherds, roofing tile pieces and brick-bats. There was a clayey patch within this layer varied from 50 to 60 cms; Layer 2 was of loose ashy soil mixed with brick-bats, pot sherds and tile pieces. The thickness of the stratum differed from 30 to 50 cm. Layer 3 was almost uniform throughout the trench and consisted of loose clayey soil mixed with potsherds and brick-bats. There was a pit at

western side within this layer containing large number of potsherds.

The first two layers revealed medieval coarse red ware, black ware, decorated sherds, rectangular roofing tiles and porcelain sherds. The third layer yielded large number of coarse red ware, painted sherds and less number of black and red ware.

PRI - 2

This trench, measuring 5 x 3 m was laid at the highest point of the mound, which is to the south of the road from Kil-palayarai to Nathankoil. The excavation yielded medieval roofing tiles and coarse variety of potsherds. Very hard clayey soil without any potsherds and brickbats appeared at the depth of 60 cms.

PRI - 3

It was a rectangular trench, covering an area of 5 x 3m, and laid to the north of the trench PRI - 2. A brick wall with five courses of bricks, running east-west direction was unearthed at the depth of 85 cms from the surface level. The measurements of the bricks are 25 x 12 x 4 cm. The eastern and western sections clearly showed that the brick wall was robbed at a later period. Header and

Stretcher method was adopted for the construction of this wall. This method of construction was also noticed in the Gangaikondacholapuram excavations. Two layers appeared and yielded medieval coarse red ware, black ware sherds and decorated sherds, rectangular roofing tiles, terracotta lamps and spouted knobs, etc.

Decorated potsherds

The trenches PRI - 1 and PRI - 3 yielded some decorated red polished potsherds. The thickness of the sherds is 1 cm. It is inferred that the decorations were made with the help of metal seals and sticks before firing. A dot within single or double circles and vertical or horizontal dotted or plain lines were the major decorated motifs (page 78).

Painted Potsherds

Fragments with paintings also occurred in the excavations, vertical or horizontal or criss-cross lines in kaolin were made on red ware sherds. Red ochre line decorations are seen on black ware.

Iron objects

Considerable numbers of iron nails varying from 2 cm to 5 cm, in height were recovered. These iron nails were

used for fixing the wooden reapers in the roof of the building for placing the rectangular tiles. Some copper nails and knob of a small copper vessel were also collected from the excavations.

Bangle Pieces

Twenty bangle pieces of medieval period were recovered from the cuttings. Glass bangle pieces, which constitute the majority in the collection, totaling 18 in number, appear to have been popular during the period. Only three of shell bangle pieces were recovered from the excavation. The glass bangle pieces are in black, blue and yellow colours both transparent and opaque in nature with circular and semi-circular cross sections.

Terracotta lamps

A few broken portions of terracotta lamps occurred from the 1st and 3rd trench yielded a heap of more than hundred full lamps. These lamps are of two types, the first type is small and very similar to the modern oil lamps with one wick being used by the village people; another type is big sized circular lamp with provision for burning four wicks (page 77). The center of the lamp is having the elevation for keeping the long wick (Plate - 13).

Terracotta spouted knobs

From the occurrence of terracotta spouted knobs from the medieval layers of all excavations in Tamilnadu, it is inferred that the spouted vessels (Utensils like kettles) were widely used in medieval period. A full globular pot of coarse red with a spout at the shoulder was recovered from Gangaikondacholapuram. Palayarai excavation also yielded five types of spouted knobs with decorations.

Terracotta votive object

A full shaped Kalasa like terracotta object with round base and tapering top, was collected from the excavation. It might have been used as a votive object.

CONCLUSION

Palayarai, once the secondary capital of the Chola kings, was established by the occurrence of the antiquities and brick structures found in the excavation.

PARTICIPANTS

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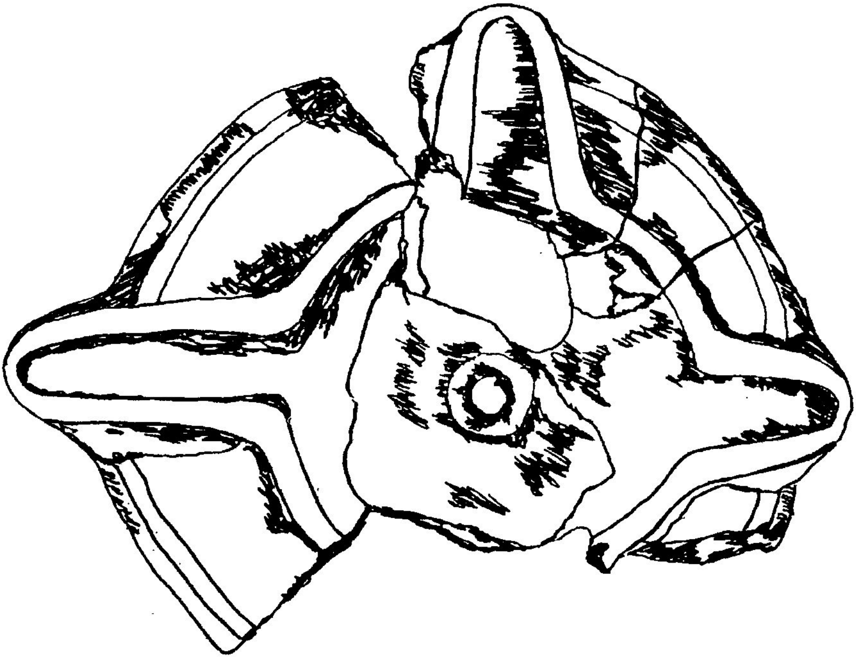
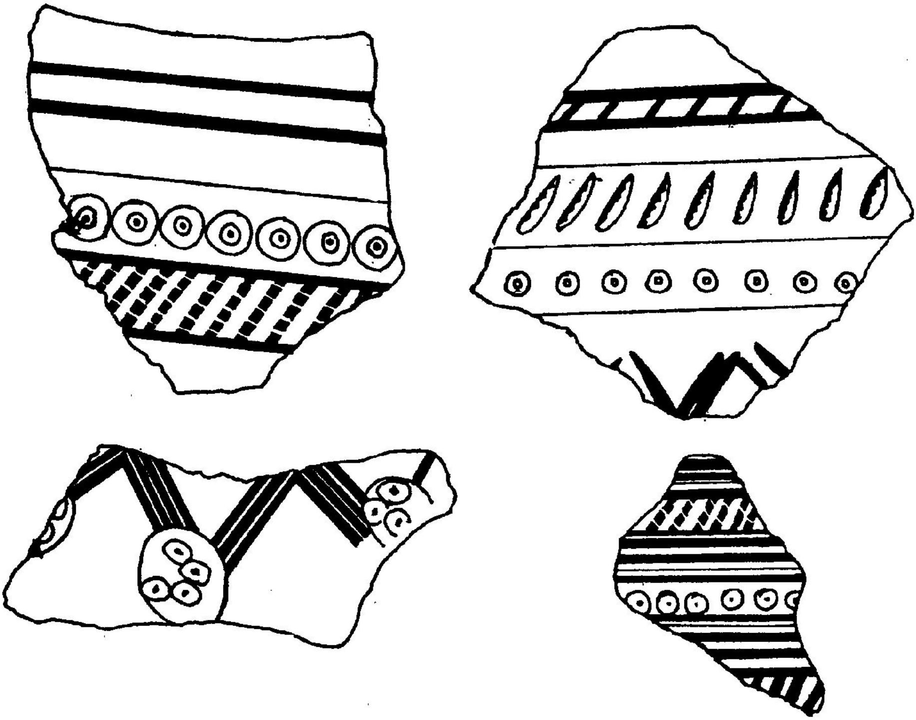
REFERENCE

'A preliminary report on Palayarai excavations' -Tamil Civilization vol. 5 No. 1 & 2 (1987) Quarterly Research journal of the Tamil University, Thanjavur.



Terracotta lamp with four wicks (Period II)

Decorated Potsherds
Palayarai



KANNANUR

Kannanur was the capital of Hoysala Kings in the 12th century CE, who ruled some parts of Tamil Nadu, and constructed Hoysaleswara Temple at Kannanur in Tiruchirapalli District (Latitude of 10^0 56' N and Longitude of 78^0 45' E). At present leaving the Hoysaleswara Temple, no other remains found in this area.

LOCATION

Kannanur is located near Samayapuram in Lalgudi Taluk. At the northern side of Kannanur, the Chennai-Tirichirapalli trunk road cuts through a highly elevated mound. About 20 years, when the Pullambadi channel was dug for irrigation purpose, a small water channel covered with stone slabs was noticed. The depth of channel from ground level is 20 feet. The channel was disturbed. To trace the existence of the water channel, systematic archaeological investigations were undertaken at the northern bank of the Pullambadi canal in the year 1983-84. At first, thorough study was made about both sections of the canal bank. At a depth of 4 m a natural rock formation was noticed. This rock formation has been cut for the construction of water channel.

KNR - I

The trial trench KNR I was laid out on the northern side of the Pullambadi canal. This place had already been disturbed. After removing the debris over this place, some brick structures were brought out. In the centre of this trench one control pit was laid out in order to trace out the water channel. At the depth of 10 metres from ground level, the stone slabs covering the water channel were noticed.

KNR - II

In order to trace out the continuation of the water channel, the trench KNR II was laid out at the northern side of KNR I. A sump well and a stone alignment were brought out. This suggests that the sump well had been utilized for the purpose of taking water from the water channel.

KNR - III

KNR III was laid out at the northern side of the trench KNR II in order to trace out the cutting edges of the rock formation. The cutting edges were noticed at a depth of 6.10 metres. The width between the two cutting edges measure 3.10 metres.

SUMP WELL (Plate - 14)

The sump well was noticed in the trench KNR II at a depth of 2.30 m. from the surface level, the inner measurement of which is 50x50 cm. The width of the sump well decreases gradually towards the bottom like a funnel, and the total depth is 4.30 m. The over all alignment shows that the sump well was constructed over the water channel. The funnel like construction indicates the difficulty of taking water from the channel through this sump well. Hence, this well might have been used as an air hose for the free flow of water through the channel (page 83).

POTTERIES

The excavation yielded a large number of coarse red ware besides a few celadon ware.

TILES

A large number of medieval roof tiles of various types were unearthed from this site.

ANTIQUITIES

This excavation also yielded few terracotta beads, glass bangle pieces, stud, a broken portion of a knife, and a large number of iron nails.

CHRONOLOGY

On the basis of the occurrence of the medieval potsherds such as coarse red ware and coarse black ware, rectangular roofing tiles and other antiquities like glass bangle pieces, iron nails and terracotta spouted knobs etc., the date for the brick structures and the water channel is tentatively fixed from about 11th century CE to 14th century CE.

PARTICIPANTS

1. Thiru D.Thulasiraman, Archaeologist
2. Thiru S.Selvaraj, Archaeological Officer.
3. Thiru Pon.Arasu, the then Assistant Under Sea Archaeologist
4. Thiru K.S.Sampath, Pre Historic Archaeologist,
5. Thiru P.Hari Paranthaman, the then Draughtsman
6. Thiru M.T.Sridharan, Photographer

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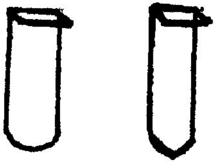
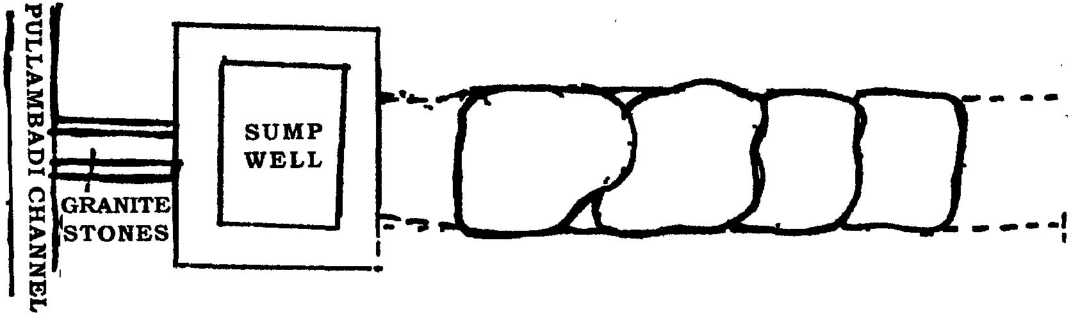
KANNANUR EXCAVATIONS

ANTIQUITIES



TILES

IRON SICKLE



EXPOSED VIEW OF SUMP WELL

LIST OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

Conducted by the State Department of Archaeology (in chronological order)

S.No.	Place	District	Excavated year
1.	Anamalai	Coimbatore	1969
2.	Panchalankurichi	Tirunelveli	1968-1969
3.	Korkai	Tuticorin	1969
4.	Vasavasamudram	Kanchipuram	1969-1970
5.	Pallavamedu	Kanchipuram	1970-1971
6.	Karur	Karur	1973-1979
			1994-1995
7.	Panayakulam	Dharmapuri	1979-1980
8.	Kovalanpottal	Madurai	1980
9.	Thondi	Ramanathapuram	1980
10.	Boluvampatti	Coimbatore	1980-1981
11.	Gangaikonda Cholapuram	Perambalur	1980-1981
			1986-1987
12.	Kannanur	Tiruchirappalli	1982-1983
13.	Palayarai	Thanjavur	1984
14.	Kurumbanmedu	Thanjavur	1984
15.	Alagankulam	Ramanathapuram	1986-1987
			1990-1998
16.	Kodumanal	Erode	1992-1993
			1996-1998
17.	Thirukkovilur	Villupuram	1992-1993
18.	Padavedu	Tiruvannamalai	1992-1993
19.	Sendamangalam	Villupuram	1992-1993
			1994-1995
20.	Tiruttangal	Virudhunagar	1994-1995
21.	Poompuhar	Nagapatinam	1994-1995
			1997-1998
22.	Teriruveli	Ramanathapuram	1999-2000
23.	Maligaimedu	Cuddalore	1999-2000
24.	Perur	Coimbatore	2001-2002
25.	Mangudi	Tirunelveli	2001-2002

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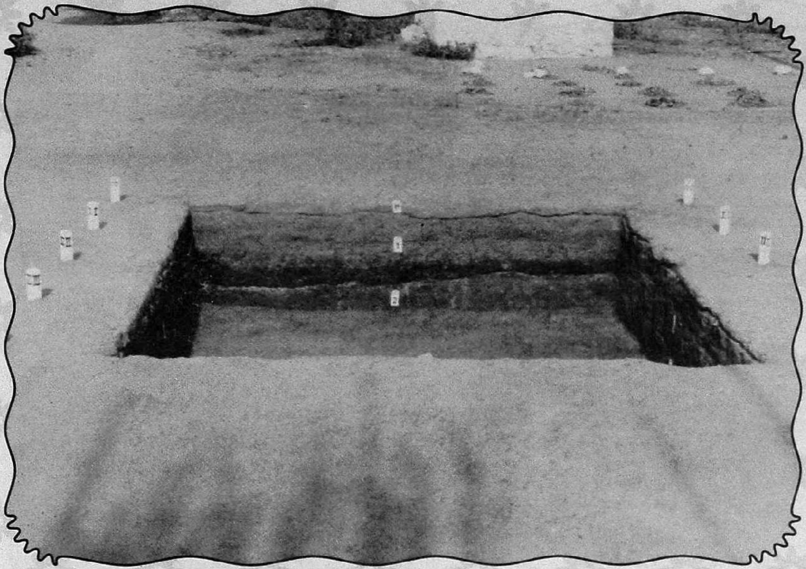
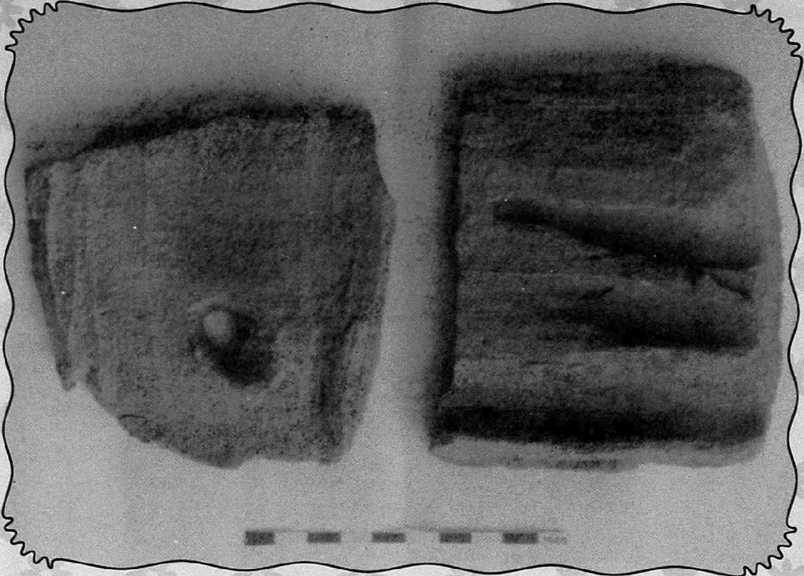


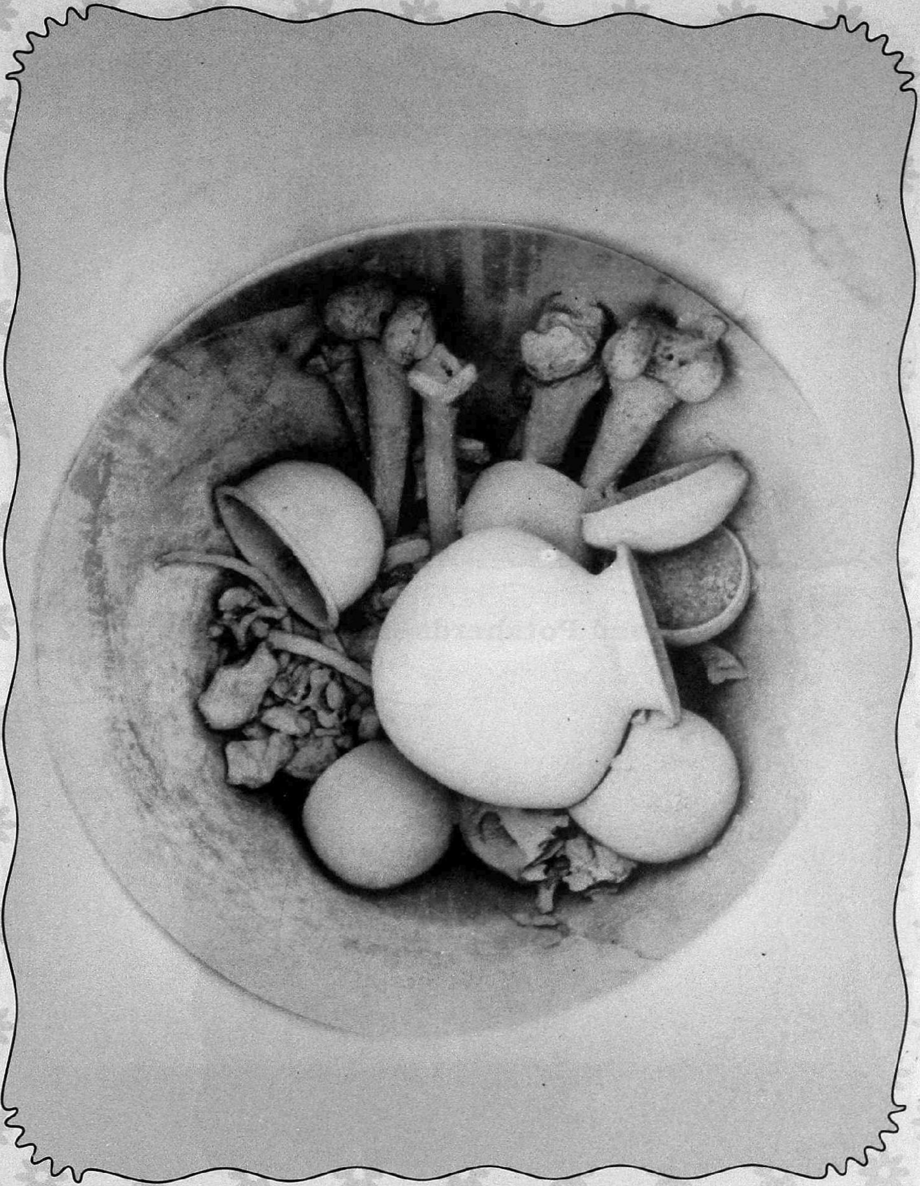
Excavated Trench-Tiruttangal

Microlithic Tools-Tiruttangal

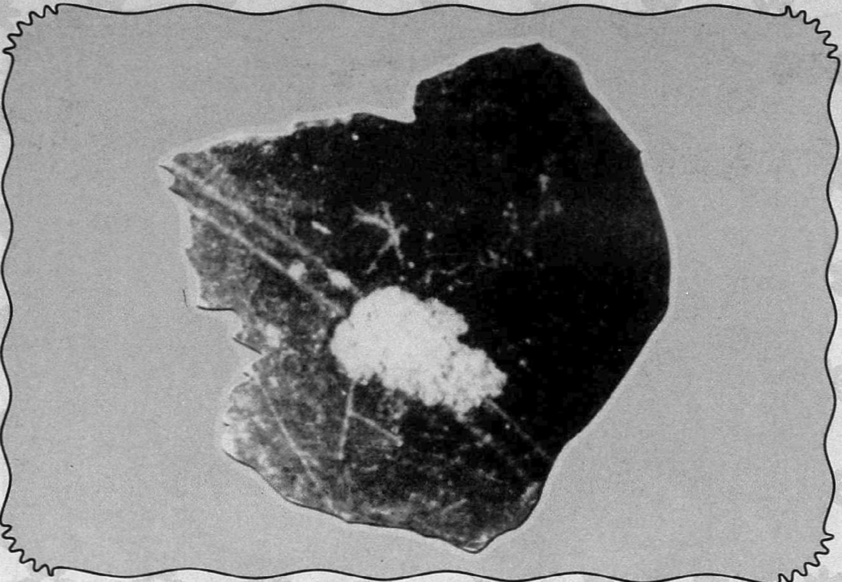


Grooved Tiles-Tiruttangal

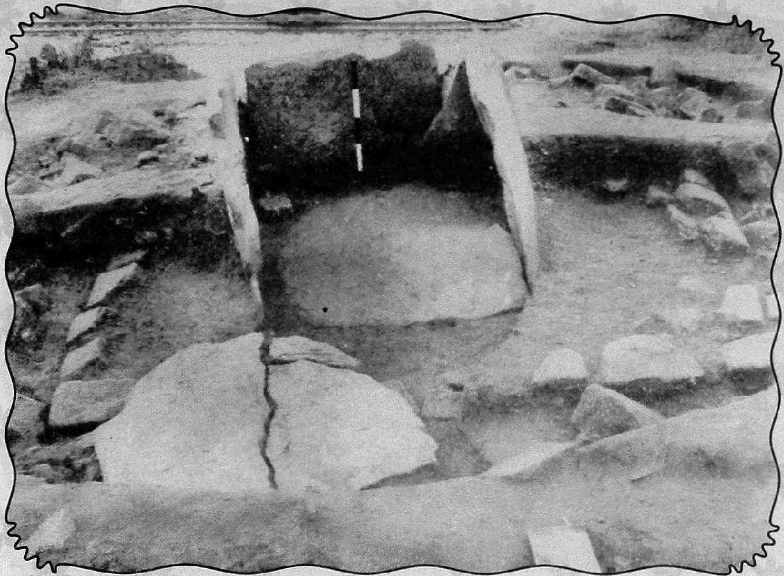
Dupakalasam -
Incense burner -
Tiruttangal



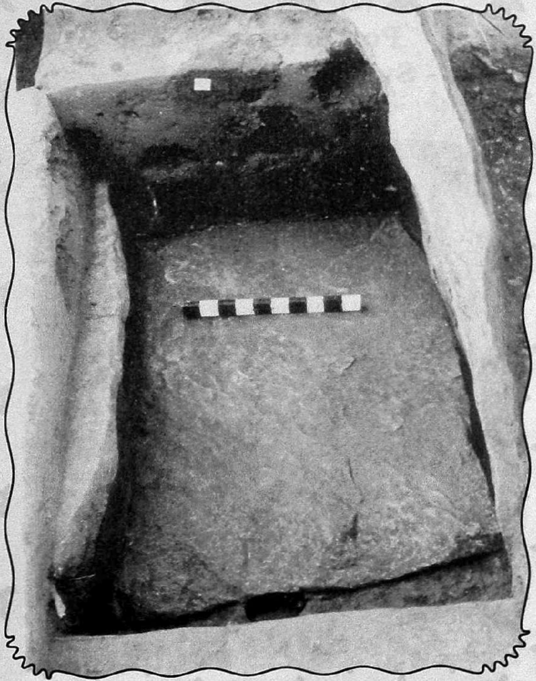
Urn-Kovalanpottal



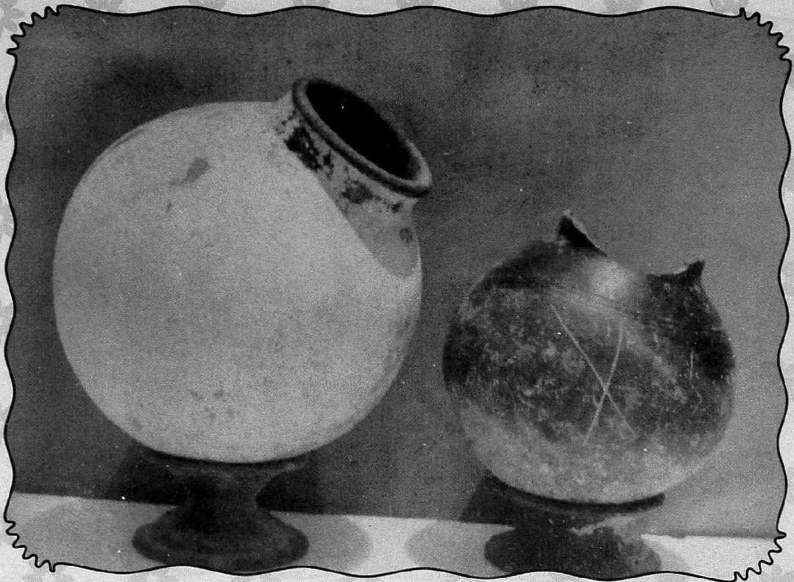
Inscribed Potsherds-Kovalanpottal



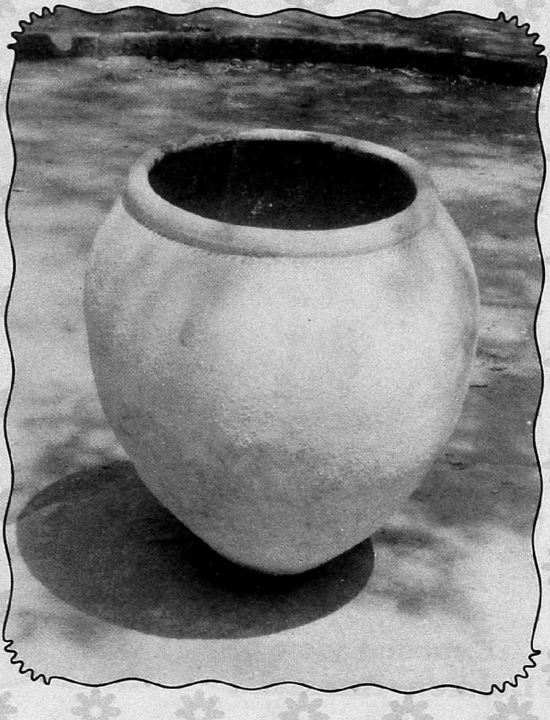
Dolmen - Anamalai

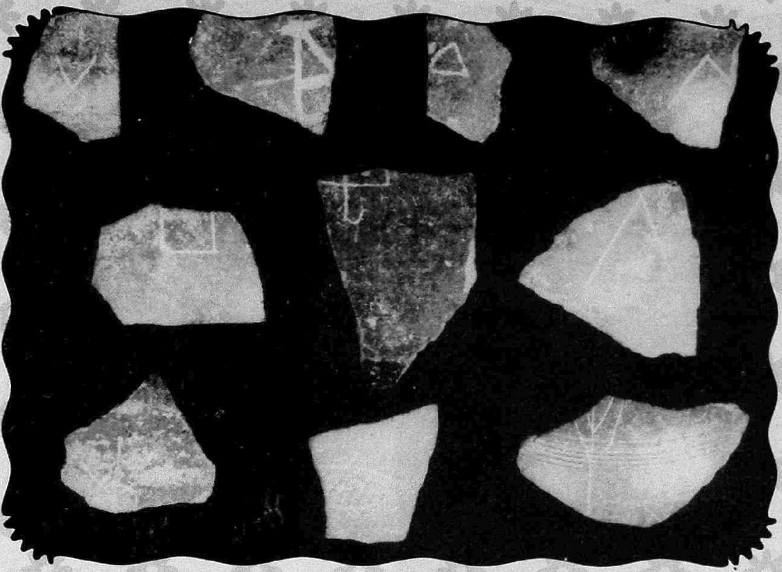


Exposed view of Dolmen -Anamalai

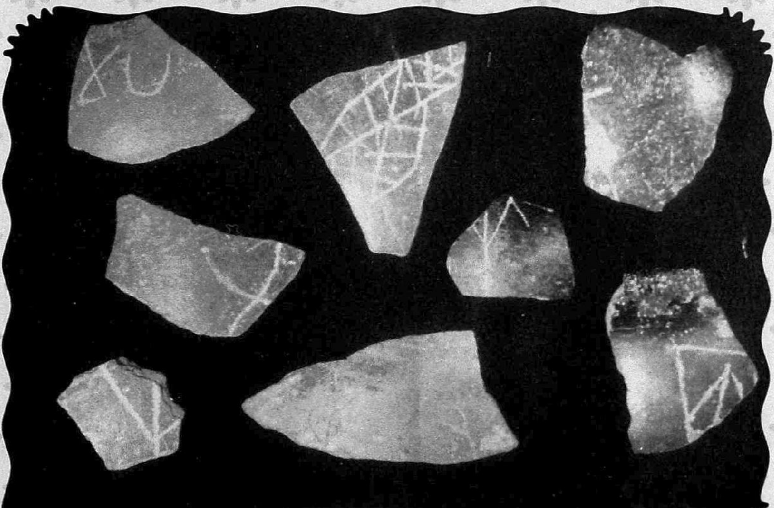


Potteries
- Surface find
- Korkai



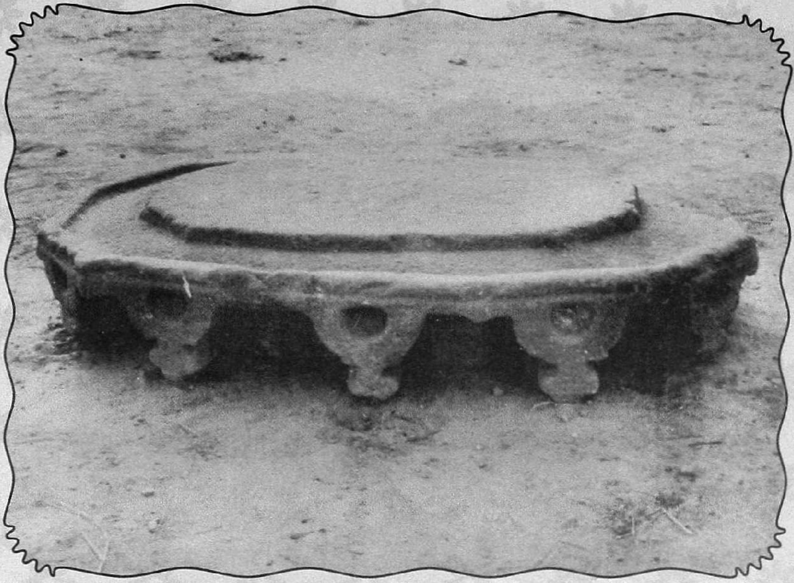


Graffiti Potsherds-Korkai



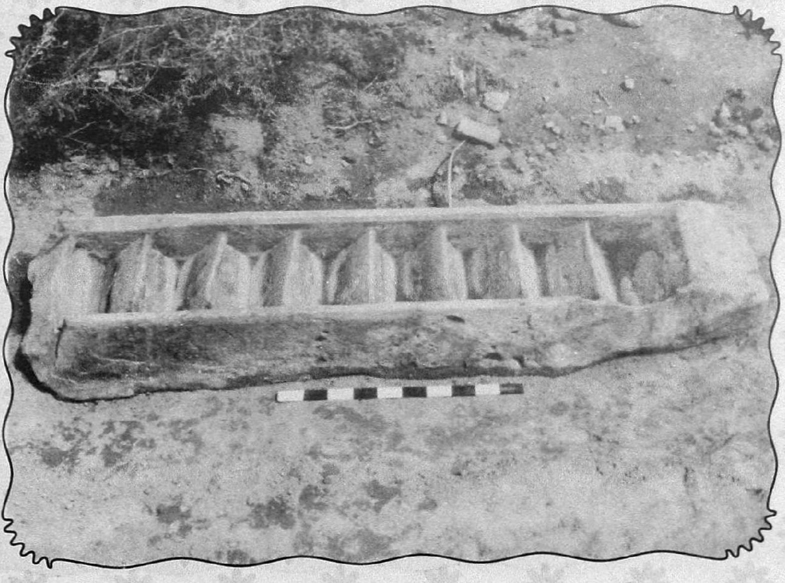
Excavated trench - Pallavamedu

Jar - Closer view - Pallavamedu



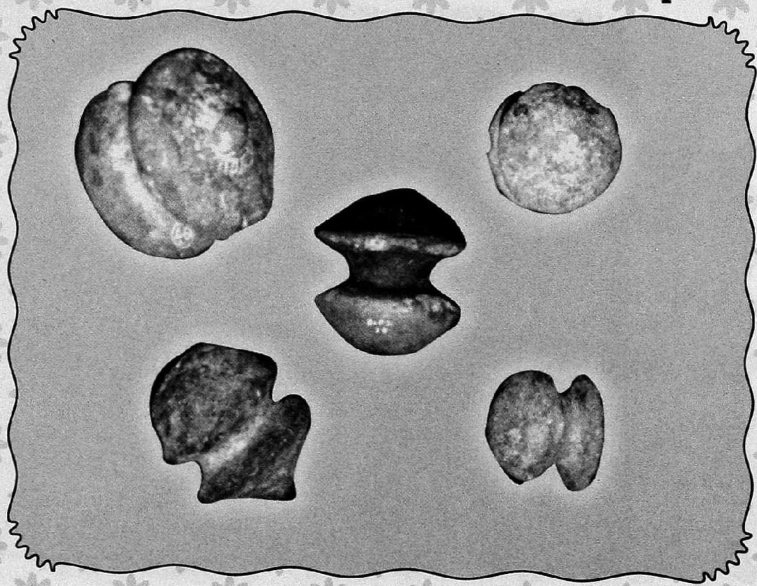
Sandal Paste Grinding Stone - Pallavamedu

Excavated Antiquity - Pallavamedu



Inscribed Potsherds - Boluvampatti

Terracotta Earlobes - Boluvampatti

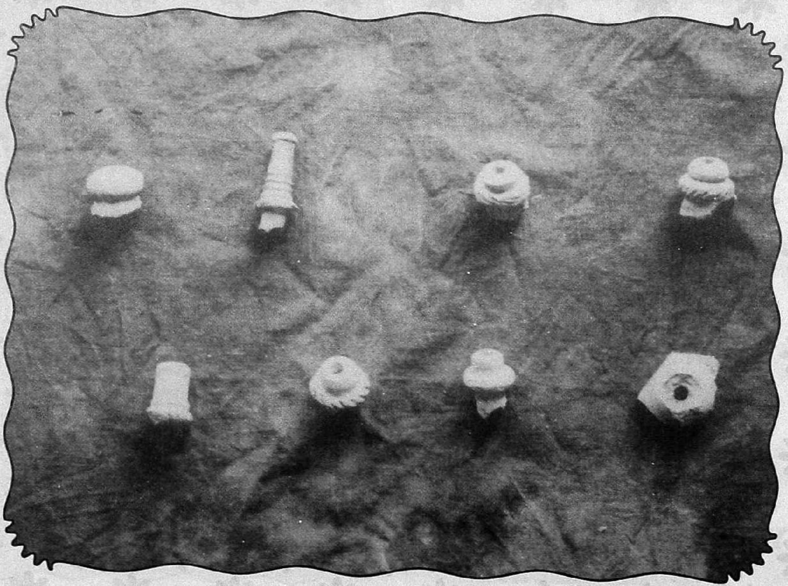


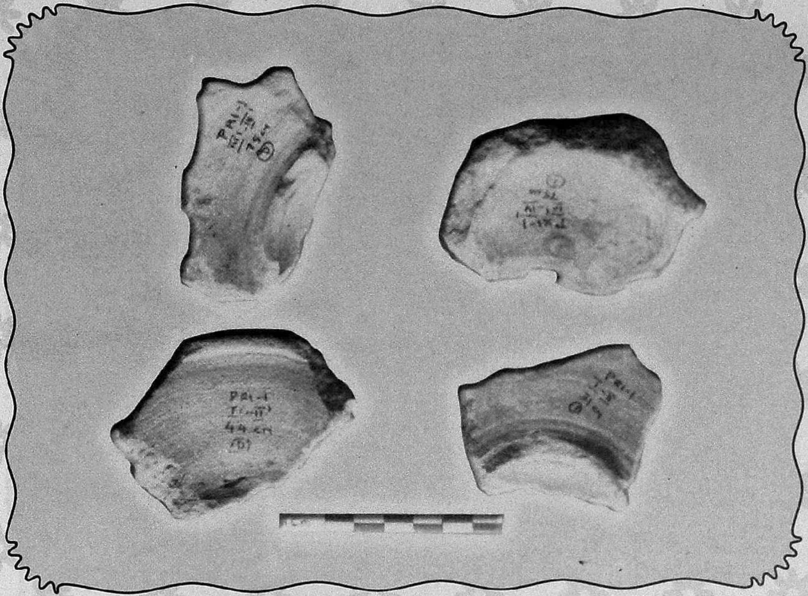
Yaksha - Front view
- Boluvampatti

Yaksha - Back view
- Boluvampatti

Terracotta figurines - Panayakulam

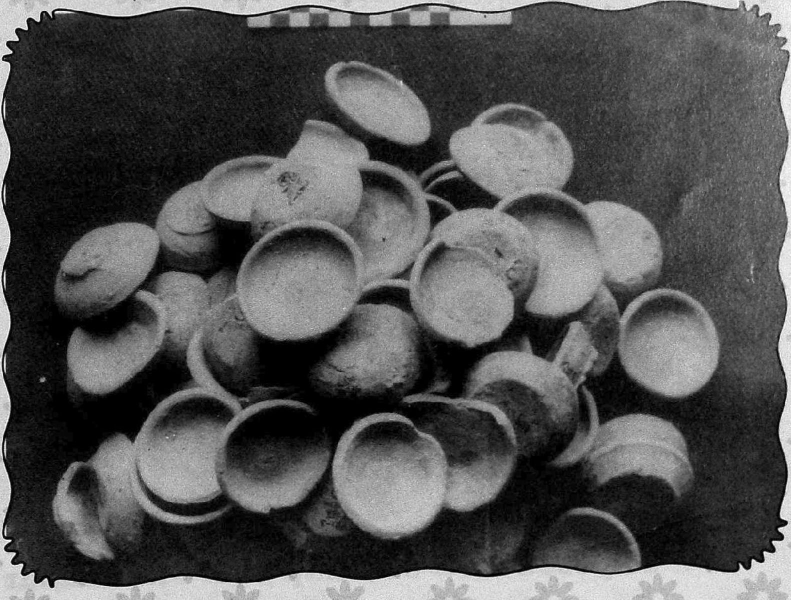
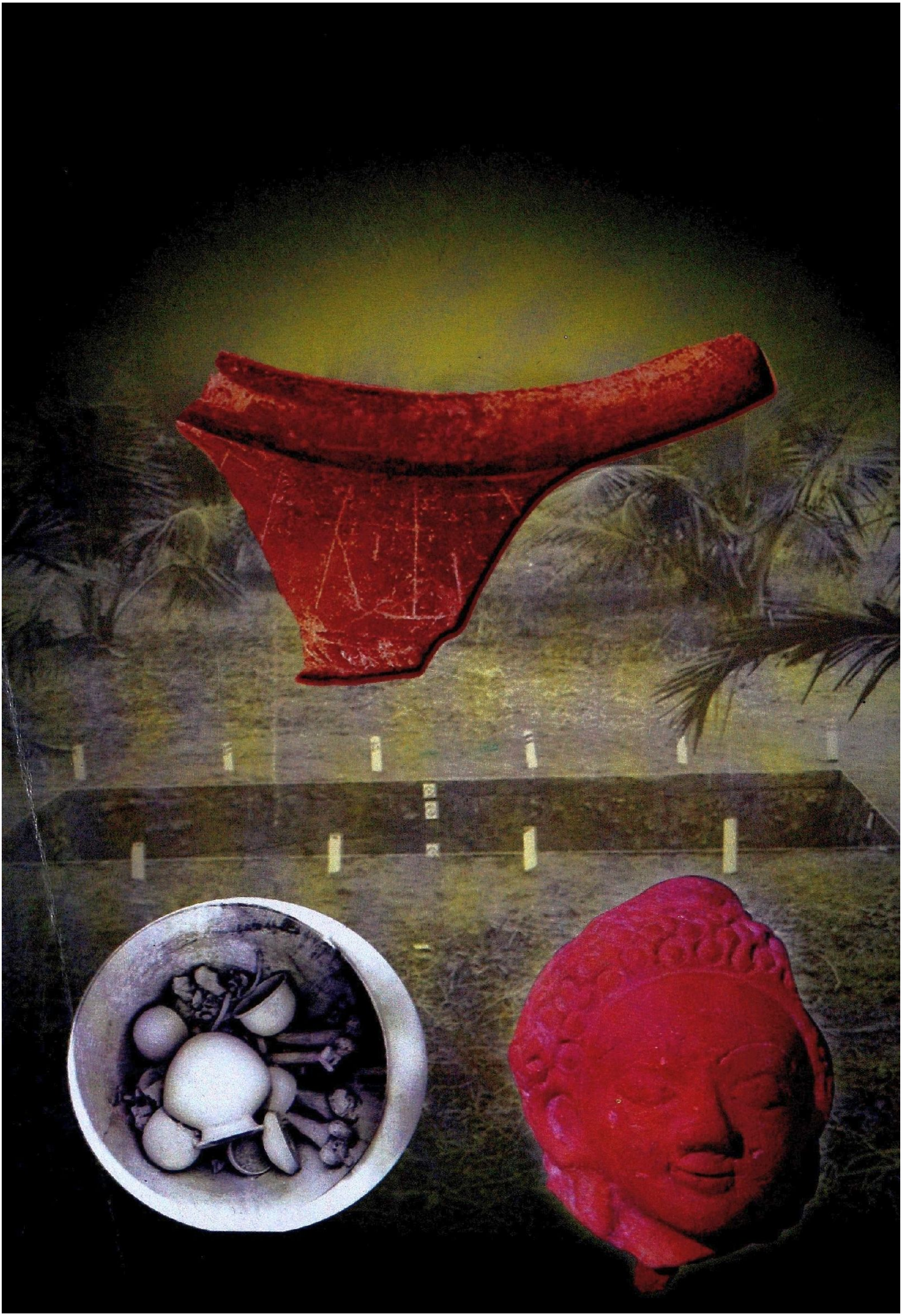
Terracotta Spouts - Kurumbanmedu





Potsherds - Palayarai

Heap of Terracotta Lamps - Palayarai



Exposed view of Sump Well - Kannanur